

<p>1 Thursday, 6 September 2018</p> <p>2 (10.00 am)</p> <p>3 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Good morning, everyone. Welcome to</p> <p>4 today's hearing, at which we are going to hear from</p> <p>5 a number of additional firefighter witnesses.</p> <p>6 Mr Kinnier.</p> <p>7 MR KINNIER: Good morning, sir, may I call Mr Nicke Merrion.</p> <p>8 NICKE MERRION (affirmed)</p> <p>9 Questions by MR KINNIER</p> <p>10 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Thank you very much, Mr Merrion.</p> <p>11 Sit down and make yourself comfortable. All right?</p> <p>12 Yes, Mr Kinnier.</p> <p>13 MR KINNIER: Good morning.</p> <p>14 First of all, could you please confirm your name for</p> <p>15 the record?</p> <p>16 A. I'm Nicke Merrion.</p> <p>17 Q. In front of you, hopefully you'll find a blue folder,</p> <p>18 and in that folder at the first tab should be your</p> <p>19 witness statement dated 17 January of this year. Is</p> <p>20 that right?</p> <p>21 A. Yes.</p> <p>22 Q. Behind that, in a separate tab, ought to be your</p> <p>23 contemporaneous notes. Is that right?</p> <p>24 A. Yes.</p> <p>25 Q. Have you read those documents recently?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 1</p>	<p>1 arrived at the scene at 01.35. Does that sound right to</p> <p>2 you?</p> <p>3 A. Yes.</p> <p>4 Q. Whilst you were en route, do you recall hearing on the</p> <p>5 radio that your pump would be an FSG crew?</p> <p>6 A. I don't remember, to be honest.</p> <p>7 Q. If I might ask Paul to draw up LFB00001914_0061.</p> <p>8 Hopefully there you'll see at the bottom of the page</p> <p>9 01.35.</p> <p>10 A. Yes.</p> <p>11 Q. You'll see:</p> <p>12 "Golf 261 Acton's Pump Ladder interrupt the CRO</p> <p>13 attempting to pass the radio message to Golf 271, North</p> <p>14 Kensington's Pump Ladder, saying they will take the</p> <p>15 'priority' message on behalf of Golf 271, North</p> <p>16 Kensington's Pump Ladder, who have not responded. The</p> <p>17 CRO passes FSG call information to Golf 261 Acton's Pump</p> <p>18 Ladder saying they have a caller on the 18th floor with</p> <p>19 thick smoke in their flat, individuals on the 22nd floor</p> <p>20 with smoke in their flat and a further call to fire on</p> <p>21 the 20th floor. In flat 82 people are also trapped.</p> <p>22 Golf 261 Acton's Pump Ladder are still on there way to</p> <p>23 the incident and they state that they will pass on the</p> <p>24 information to Golf 271, North Kensington's Pump Ladder,</p> <p>25 when they arrive."</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 3</p>
<p>1 A. Yes.</p> <p>2 Q. Do you confirm their contents are true?</p> <p>3 A. Yes.</p> <p>4 Q. Do you confirm that you're content for those documents</p> <p>5 to stand as your evidence to the inquiry?</p> <p>6 A. Yes.</p> <p>7 Q. Thank you.</p> <p>8 Now, Mr Merrion, if at any time you require a break,</p> <p>9 please say so; that's no problem. Most importantly, if</p> <p>10 at any time my questions are unclear, please say so and</p> <p>11 I'll try and rephrase them so they are clear for you.</p> <p>12 Could we deal with some basic matters first.</p> <p>13 At the time of the fire, you were a firefighter</p> <p>14 based at Acton; is that right?</p> <p>15 A. Yes.</p> <p>16 Q. How long have you been a firefighter?</p> <p>17 A. Now coming up to 15 years.</p> <p>18 Q. On the night, the appliance which you were in, the call</p> <p>19 sign was Golf 261. Is that right?</p> <p>20 A. Yes.</p> <p>21 Q. On the evening, you worked with Firefighter</p> <p>22 Harvey Saunders, who was your BA partner; is that right?</p> <p>23 A. Yes.</p> <p>24 Q. The LFB records indicate that you were mobilised at</p> <p>25 01.20, you were on the road at 01.22, and that you'd</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 2</p>	<p>1 Do you remember that?</p> <p>2 A. No.</p> <p>3 Q. In terms of the timings of your BA wear, the LFB records</p> <p>4 indicate that the SDBA was disconnected from the</p> <p>5 appliance at 01.31 and tally out at the bridgehead was</p> <p>6 at 01.51. Does that sound right to you?</p> <p>7 A. Yes.</p> <p>8 Q. Now, you've given a detailed statement. I'm not going</p> <p>9 to go through each and every element of that, but what</p> <p>10 I would like to do is just focus on the particular FSG</p> <p>11 mission you were tasked to complete.</p> <p>12 First of all, could I deal with your BA entry into</p> <p>13 the tower.</p> <p>14 First of all, do you recall, on your entry into the</p> <p>15 tower, seeing the forward information board at the</p> <p>16 2nd-floor bridgehead?</p> <p>17 A. Yes.</p> <p>18 Q. If I could ask Paul to put up MET00018749_0001.</p> <p>19 Is that the forward information board you remember</p> <p>20 seeing?</p> <p>21 A. Yes, I remember seeing it. I don't remember the</p> <p>22 information that was written on it.</p> <p>23 Q. If you see in the middle right-hand side what appears to</p> <p>24 be written: "14 floor" --</p> <p>25 A. Yes.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 4</p>

<p>1 Q. -- "111", and underneath that written: "8 persons".</p> <p>2 Do you remember seeing that as you entered the</p> <p>3 tower?</p> <p>4 A. No.</p> <p>5 Q. You see there the numbers "111" written down. If</p> <p>6 I could ask Paul to put the forward information board</p> <p>7 down and turn to your own contemporaneous notes,</p> <p>8 MET00005470_0001.</p> <p>9 A. Yes.</p> <p>10 Q. Apologies, it's always difficult reading the handwritten</p> <p>11 notes, but if you go roughly halfway down that page you</p> <p>12 say, "We went to the 14 floor flat 112".</p> <p>13 A. Yes.</p> <p>14 Q. When you were deployed, can you remember, were you</p> <p>15 deployed to flat 111 or to 112?</p> <p>16 A. I can't remember now.</p> <p>17 Q. If I could ask you to turn back to your witness</p> <p>18 statement, page 5, the third paragraph on that page and</p> <p>19 line 3, you say:</p> <p>20 "We were told to effect Fire Survival Guidance</p> <p>21 rescue calls (FSG) on the 14th floor. This meant that</p> <p>22 the advice was that it was deemed to be safest to get</p> <p>23 occupants to stay in their flat. We were told to give</p> <p>24 the residents on the 14th floor this advice."</p> <p>25 First of all, who gave you your instructions?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 5</p>	<p>1 A. No, I can't recall that.</p> <p>2 Q. In that extract from your statement which we've looked</p> <p>3 at, you very specifically say that you were deployed to</p> <p>4 give FSG advice to stay put, ie to remain within their</p> <p>5 flats. Could I ask you a few questions about that.</p> <p>6 A. Yes.</p> <p>7 Q. What would have been the purpose in telling the</p> <p>8 occupants to stay where they were, at this stage?</p> <p>9 A. At that stage, as in other high-rise procedures, staying</p> <p>10 in your flat is generally the safest place to be.</p> <p>11 Q. Was it your clear understanding that you were not to</p> <p>12 bring the occupants of the flats on 14 down?</p> <p>13 A. I don't remember being told that at all, no.</p> <p>14 Q. Whilst you were in the lobby or in the bridgehead, did</p> <p>15 you see any residents evacuating the tower?</p> <p>16 A. I remember people coming down. I don't remember it as</p> <p>17 we were at the bridgehead though.</p> <p>18 Q. Seeing residents coming down, were they coming down</p> <p>19 without the assistance of a BA set, can you remember?</p> <p>20 A. Very few were. Maybe one or two I think I remember</p> <p>21 seeing.</p> <p>22 Q. Can you remember the physical condition of the residents</p> <p>23 who were evacuating at that time?</p> <p>24 A. They weren't in a good state, to be honest.</p> <p>25 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Can you explain that a bit more?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 7</p>
<p>1 A. I can't remember now.</p> <p>2 Q. Was it a man or a woman?</p> <p>3 A. I can't remember.</p> <p>4 Q. Do you remember whether the individual had an accent,</p> <p>5 an Irish accent, for example?</p> <p>6 A. No, I can't remember.</p> <p>7 Q. What further detail were you given regarding those FSG</p> <p>8 calls on the 14th floor?</p> <p>9 A. We were just told to give them advice, tell them to stay</p> <p>10 in their flats.</p> <p>11 Q. Were you given any details of the occupants of the flats</p> <p>12 on the 14th floor?</p> <p>13 A. No.</p> <p>14 Q. Were you given any plans setting out the layout of the</p> <p>15 14th floor?</p> <p>16 A. No.</p> <p>17 Q. Were you told whether there were any children on the</p> <p>18 14th floor?</p> <p>19 A. No.</p> <p>20 Q. Were you given any information regarding conditions, for</p> <p>21 example, in the stairwell going up from the bridgehead</p> <p>22 to the 14th floor?</p> <p>23 A. No, I can't recall that.</p> <p>24 Q. Were you given any information regarding conditions</p> <p>25 within the flats from where FSG calls had been made?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 6</p>	<p>1 A. They were struggling to breathe as they were coming out,</p> <p>2 coughing. Yeah, things like that.</p> <p>3 MR KINNIER: Given the condition of the individuals you</p> <p>4 witnessed whilst you were waiting to go up, did you</p> <p>5 think whether it might be sensible or practical to take</p> <p>6 up a spare BA set with you to assist people down if that</p> <p>7 became necessary?</p> <p>8 A. No, not at that time.</p> <p>9 Q. What was the point, I suppose is the blunt question, in</p> <p>10 going up to the flats on floor 14 to tell them to stay</p> <p>11 put when that information could've been given to them by</p> <p>12 the phone?</p> <p>13 A. I don't know, to be honest. It's normal procedure in</p> <p>14 high-rise to tell people to stay in their flats. If</p> <p>15 people start coming out of their flats, to tell them to</p> <p>16 go back in and wait for any other advice.</p> <p>17 Q. In terms of your understanding of the scope of the</p> <p>18 mission, Mr Murphy and Mr Cornelius, who we will hear</p> <p>19 from later today, both say they were told to carry out</p> <p>20 search and rescue. There is no suggestion that they</p> <p>21 didn't have instructions to leave occupants there.</p> <p>22 Are you sure there was no instruction to bring the</p> <p>23 occupants down?</p> <p>24 A. No, not to me, I don't think.</p> <p>25 Q. Is that to say you're sure there was no such</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 8</p>

<p>1 instruction?</p> <p>2 A. No, I'm not 100 per cent sure.</p> <p>3 Q. Okay.</p> <p>4 Could I ask you next about your assessment of the</p> <p>5 conditions on your way up the tower.</p> <p>6 If I could ask you to turn to page 5 again of your</p> <p>7 witness statement and the fourth paragraph, where you</p> <p>8 say:</p> <p>9 "There was smoke on the stairs from the 2nd floor</p> <p>10 all the way up to the 14th floor so if we had tried to</p> <p>11 get people out from the 14th floor they wouldn't have</p> <p>12 made it down. "</p> <p>13 Now, just dealing with that short paragraph, is that</p> <p>14 a view you had on the night or is it a view you formed</p> <p>15 later on after your experiences within the tower?</p> <p>16 A. No, that was at the time.</p> <p>17 Q. Given that assessment, again I ask the question: what</p> <p>18 consideration did you give to possible means to assist</p> <p>19 people leaving the tower, spare BA sets, for example?</p> <p>20 A. I don't know, to be honest.</p> <p>21 Q. Was there any discussion of taking up spare BA sets when</p> <p>22 you were in the lobby or at the bridgehead?</p> <p>23 A. No.</p> <p>24 Q. Given that this was a relatively early stage in your</p> <p>25 journey up the tower, how did you know conditions to be</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 9</p>	<p>1 A. No, I don't.</p> <p>2 Q. Paul, could I ask you to turn up a photo. The reference</p> <p>3 is INQ00000248-249.</p> <p>4 (Pause)</p> <p>5 Actually, we can park that. There's some</p> <p>6 difficulty. I'll move on to different questions whilst</p> <p>7 we get that sorted.</p> <p>8 I now turn to what the conditions were like on the</p> <p>9 14th floor itself.</p> <p>10 As you were going up, you noticed there was unusual</p> <p>11 white smoke.</p> <p>12 Did you ever turn off your BA to test breathing</p> <p>13 conditions as you were going up?</p> <p>14 A. No.</p> <p>15 Q. Did you turn off your BA once you were at the</p> <p>16 14th floor?</p> <p>17 A. I took my mask off in a flat. I can't remember which</p> <p>18 one.</p> <p>19 Q. As you were going up, had anyone warned you of the scale</p> <p>20 of the staircase, its breadth or otherwise?</p> <p>21 A. No.</p> <p>22 Q. What equipment did you encounter as you were going up</p> <p>23 the stairwell, firefighting media, et cetera?</p> <p>24 A. I remember there being some hose on the stairwell.</p> <p>25 I can't remember anything else.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 11</p>
<p>1 so bad further up that it was unlikely that people could</p> <p>2 come down from the 14th floor?</p> <p>3 A. Well, I didn't know until I got to the 14th.</p> <p>4 Q. So it's a view you formed after you got to the top?</p> <p>5 A. Yes.</p> <p>6 Q. Did anyone, whilst you were waiting at the lobby on the</p> <p>7 bridgehead, any other firefighter coming down, give you</p> <p>8 any steer or guidance as to what conditions were like,</p> <p>9 first of all, in the stairwell going up the tower?</p> <p>10 A. No, I don't remember.</p> <p>11 Q. You refer here to saying that conditions deteriorated</p> <p>12 from the 2nd floor onwards. The bridgehead I think at</p> <p>13 that stage was on the 2nd floor.</p> <p>14 A. Yes.</p> <p>15 Q. Are you sure that the smoke conditions were as you</p> <p>16 describe from the 2nd floor onwards and not, say, higher</p> <p>17 up, the 5th floor, for example?</p> <p>18 A. It may have been higher. 3rd or 4th floor, I think it</p> <p>19 was.</p> <p>20 Q. So slightly higher up from the bridgehead?</p> <p>21 A. Yes.</p> <p>22 Q. During the deployment, as you were going up the</p> <p>23 stairwell, did you see a team coming down with a mother</p> <p>24 and daughter as evacuees being helped with a spare BA</p> <p>25 set and mask?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 10</p>	<p>1 Q. As you were going up, did you encounter any firefighters</p> <p>2 who were helping residents evacuate?</p> <p>3 A. No, not that I can remember.</p> <p>4 Q. Were you aware that Mr Murphy and Mr Cornelius were</p> <p>5 deployed to the 14th floor at roughly the same time as</p> <p>6 you were?</p> <p>7 A. Yes. I don't remember their names, but I know a crew</p> <p>8 was deployed at the same time as us.</p> <p>9 Q. Were you present when they were briefed?</p> <p>10 A. No.</p> <p>11 Q. Did you witness them as you were queueing up to go to</p> <p>12 the bridgehead?</p> <p>13 A. I can't remember who they are, to be honest.</p> <p>14 Q. As you were going up the tower, am I right in saying</p> <p>15 that the ADSU sounded?</p> <p>16 A. Yeah.</p> <p>17 Q. For everyone in the room, can you explain what the ADSU</p> <p>18 is, first of all?</p> <p>19 A. ADSU is a warning system. If we stop moving for more</p> <p>20 than 10 seconds, it sets off an alarm. It can also be</p> <p>21 set off by yourself. There's a button on it that – it</p> <p>22 signals that you're in trouble.</p> <p>23 Q. It signalled, and what did you do next?</p> <p>24 A. My ADSU went off. I told the other crew that we were</p> <p>25 with that I was going to go down to entry control and</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 12</p>

<p>1 have it turned off and then we'll come back up.</p> <p>2 Q. When it went off, did you try and radio down to the</p> <p>3 bridgehead to say you were coming down?</p> <p>4 A. Yes. We let entry control know that it had gone off</p> <p>5 accidentally.</p> <p>6 Q. Were you able to get through to entry control?</p> <p>7 A. Yes, I believe so.</p> <p>8 Q. When you got down to entry control, were you given any</p> <p>9 further update as to conditions on the 14th floor at</p> <p>10 that stage?</p> <p>11 A. No.</p> <p>12 Q. Were you given any further update as to the content of</p> <p>13 FSGs received from the 14th floor?</p> <p>14 A. No.</p> <p>15 Q. Did you consider, given the conditions you encountered,</p> <p>16 taking up a spare BA set to assist residents coming</p> <p>17 down?</p> <p>18 A. No.</p> <p>19 Q. Apologies, if I can go back to the question I asked</p> <p>20 earlier, whether you saw a mother and daughter coming</p> <p>21 down.</p> <p>22 Paul, if you could turn up photo reference</p> <p>23 INQ00000248 and then 249, might be better. No, I don't</p> <p>24 think those are the useful references.</p> <p>25 If I can now go to the 14th floor itself, and the</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 13</p>	<p>1 the bridgehead or the entry control point for a fresh</p> <p>2 crew of firefighters to be sent up the tower in order to</p> <p>3 meet any evacuees coming down from floor 14 halfway or</p> <p>4 somewhere safer?</p> <p>5 A. No.</p> <p>6 Q. Would that have been helpful?</p> <p>7 A. I don't believe so.</p> <p>8 Q. Why?</p> <p>9 A. Unless the stairwell was clear of smoke or they had</p> <p>10 their own oxygen supply.</p> <p>11 Q. Mr Omar Alhajali, who is one of the gentlemen you met,</p> <p>12 says that he asked about whether there were any spare</p> <p>13 masks. Do you remember that question being asked?</p> <p>14 A. I do, yes.</p> <p>15 Q. Do you remember, what was your response?</p> <p>16 A. I said there wasn't.</p> <p>17 Q. What did he say to that, do you remember?</p> <p>18 A. I can't remember, no.</p> <p>19 Q. Do you remember whilst you were talking to</p> <p>20 Mr Alhajali -- he says that smoke came into the flat and</p> <p>21 caused the fire alarm to go off; do you remember that?</p> <p>22 A. No.</p> <p>23 Q. Is it possible that that happened?</p> <p>24 A. It is possible, yeah.</p> <p>25 Q. If I can ask you to turn to page 7 of your witness</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 15</p>
<p>1 flats you encountered on the 14th floor.</p> <p>2 It may be useful if we turn to a plan that was</p> <p>3 attached to Mr Murphy's witness statement, and that</p> <p>4 reference is MET00013064-1.</p> <p>5 Is it right that the first flat you went to was</p> <p>6 flat 112?</p> <p>7 A. Yes, I believe so.</p> <p>8 Q. There, as you say in your statement, you found two men</p> <p>9 with tanned in their mid to late 30s; is that right?</p> <p>10 A. Yes.</p> <p>11 Q. You say in your statement that they were anxious to</p> <p>12 leave the flat but you advised otherwise.</p> <p>13 Why did you advise for them to stay in the flat?</p> <p>14 A. Because the stairwell was so smoke-logged that I didn't</p> <p>15 think it was a good idea for them to come through that.</p> <p>16 Q. If they had elected to leave their flat and gone down in</p> <p>17 any event, given the conditions in the lobby and the</p> <p>18 stairwell, what do you think would've happened?</p> <p>19 A. I don't think they would've been able to make it to the</p> <p>20 bottom.</p> <p>21 Q. When you were assessing whether they should go down the</p> <p>22 stairs, did you take into account their age and likely</p> <p>23 capacity to get down?</p> <p>24 A. No.</p> <p>25 Q. Do you think it would've been possible to radio down to</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 14</p>	<p>1 statement, and it's really the penultimate paragraph on</p> <p>2 that page. I'll read out all of it so it's in the</p> <p>3 record:</p> <p>4 "I think the guy in the flat I had been in came out</p> <p>5 into the hallway and said that the fire was getting</p> <p>6 closer. I went back into the flat I first went into and</p> <p>7 I saw some smoke to the rear of the flat. I was only in</p> <p>8 there for about 30 seconds the second time I entered.</p> <p>9 I came back out and we made the decision but we decided</p> <p>10 to move all the people on the 14th floor into one flat,</p> <p>11 the one we deemed to be the safest. I don't know who</p> <p>12 actually made the decision."</p> <p>13 Looking back now, looking at who made the decision,</p> <p>14 by a process of elimination, did you suggest that people</p> <p>15 should be moved from flats into flat 113?</p> <p>16 A. I don't know.</p> <p>17 Q. You can't remember or you don't --</p> <p>18 A. I can't remember. I don't know.</p> <p>19 Q. You have no recollection at all as to who suggested it?</p> <p>20 A. No.</p> <p>21 Q. Was the decision to move everyone into flat 113 based on</p> <p>22 your assessment of smoke conditions or because of a fear</p> <p>23 of not having enough air for you to get back down the</p> <p>24 tower, or were both factors in your decision-making?</p> <p>25 A. I think it was because the amount of people on that</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 16</p>

<p>1 floor, if they did need to be evacuated, they'd all be</p> <p>2 in the same flat and we'd know exactly where they were.</p> <p>3 Q. Given the decision to put people in the same flat, 113,</p> <p>4 did you radio down to the bridgehead, or try to radio</p> <p>5 down to the bridgehead, the decision that had been made?</p> <p>6 A. I can't remember, to be honest.</p> <p>7 Q. Do you remember anyone trying to do that?</p> <p>8 A. No, I can't remember.</p> <p>9 Q. You clearly used your radio at the first stage of the</p> <p>10 deployment to contact the entry control staging post</p> <p>11 that you were coming back down because your ADSU had</p> <p>12 started.</p> <p>13 A. Yes.</p> <p>14 Q. Did you think to try and use your radio later on to</p> <p>15 inform either the bridgehead or entry control that you</p> <p>16 were putting everyone in floor 14 in flat 113?</p> <p>17 A. I can't remember if we did or didn't, to be honest.</p> <p>18 Q. During the night, did you have any issues getting</p> <p>19 through to the bridgehead using your radio?</p> <p>20 A. No, I don't think so.</p> <p>21 Q. So if you had decided to contact the bridgehead or entry</p> <p>22 control, your view is you could've got through?</p> <p>23 A. The times that I did -- or we did try and radio through</p> <p>24 to entry control, we didn't have any problems.</p> <p>25 Q. Apologies, I should've asked you this at the outset, but</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 17</p>	<p>1 A. I think I may have gone in the hallway of flat 113.</p> <p>2 Q. How long were you in the hallway for, can you remember?</p> <p>3 A. Not very long.</p> <p>4 Q. A minute, under a minute, more than a minute?</p> <p>5 A. Under a minute.</p> <p>6 Q. Who could you see from the hallway who was in flat 113?</p> <p>7 A. I cannot remember, to be honest.</p> <p>8 Q. Do you remember seeing a child in there?</p> <p>9 A. No.</p> <p>10 Q. How would you assess the smoke conditions within</p> <p>11 flat 113 from your perspective in the hallway?</p> <p>12 A. As I remember, the flats were fairly clear of smoke.</p> <p>13 Q. But when you were talking to Mr Alhajali, had you been</p> <p>14 able to assess the smoke conditions within flat 112?</p> <p>15 A. I don't remember there being much smoke in flat 112</p> <p>16 either.</p> <p>17 Q. What were the smoke conditions in the lobby on floor 14,</p> <p>18 can you remember?</p> <p>19 A. The lift lobby, there was a small amount of smoke.</p> <p>20 Q. Whilst you were on floor 14, did the smoke conditions</p> <p>21 deteriorate, remain stable or improve?</p> <p>22 A. In the lift lobby, I felt they stayed the same.</p> <p>23 Q. Do you remember seeing a gentleman from flat 111?</p> <p>24 A. No.</p> <p>25 Q. Do you remember seeing a mother and a child?</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 19</p>
<p>1 what type of radio did you have on you?</p> <p>2 A. I had my handheld radio. I can't remember if I had BA</p> <p>3 comms as well.</p> <p>4 Q. Some firefighters have also discussed having mobile</p> <p>5 phones on them. They've emphasised that it's usually</p> <p>6 only senior officers who are allowed to have them but</p> <p>7 people do carry them with them.</p> <p>8 Did you carry your mobile phone with you on the</p> <p>9 night?</p> <p>10 A. I think so.</p> <p>11 Q. Did you use it at all on the night?</p> <p>12 A. No.</p> <p>13 Q. Have you, in your experience, encountered any</p> <p>14 difficulties with radio communications in high-rise</p> <p>15 concrete buildings using the handheld radios or BARIE</p> <p>16 sets?</p> <p>17 A. No, not the new radios, no.</p> <p>18 Q. Can you remember whether anyone raised the possibility</p> <p>19 of seeking instructions from either the bridgehead or</p> <p>20 entry control as to how best to deal with the occupants</p> <p>21 of floor 14 and how --</p> <p>22 A. No.</p> <p>23 Q. If I can now deal with the question of flat 113.</p> <p>24 Did you go into flat 113 at any stage during the</p> <p>25 evening?</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 18</p>	<p>1 A. No, I can't remember.</p> <p>2 Q. Were you able to form a view as to how many people were</p> <p>3 within flat 113?</p> <p>4 A. I can't remember, to be honest.</p> <p>5 Q. Do you remember any discussion in which the number of</p> <p>6 people within flat 113 was discussed whilst you were</p> <p>7 still on the 14th floor?</p> <p>8 A. No.</p> <p>9 Q. You went back down to the bridgehead; that's right?</p> <p>10 A. Yeah.</p> <p>11 Q. When you got down to the bridgehead, was it about to be</p> <p>12 moved from the 2nd floor?</p> <p>13 A. I don't know.</p> <p>14 Q. Did any other crews exit at the same time you did from</p> <p>15 floor 14?</p> <p>16 A. I don't believe so.</p> <p>17 Q. How long did it take you to get down from floor 14 to</p> <p>18 the bridgehead?</p> <p>19 A. I've no idea. I don't know at all.</p> <p>20 Q. Had the conditions in the stairwell deteriorated,</p> <p>21 improved or remained stable from your first trip up?</p> <p>22 A. I think they were the same as when we first went up.</p> <p>23 Q. When you got to the bridgehead, did you debrief the</p> <p>24 officer in charge of the bridgehead as to, first of all,</p> <p>25 conditions you'd found in the stairwell?</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 20</p>

<p>1 A. Yeah, I believe so.</p> <p>2 Q. How did you describe those conditions to him?</p> <p>3 A. I can't remember if we told the officer in charge,</p> <p>4 I think we told entry control, but I can't remember who</p> <p>5 we told, but we just said it was still very smoke-logged</p> <p>6 on the stairs.</p> <p>7 Q. What debrief did you give as to placing the occupants of</p> <p>8 the flats on floor 14 in flat 113?</p> <p>9 A. I think we told entry control that everyone on the</p> <p>10 14th floor was in the same flat.</p> <p>11 Q. Did you tell the officer in charge of the bridgehead?</p> <p>12 A. I think myself and Firefighter Saunders did, yes.</p> <p>13 Q. It would've been important, given the FSG calls from the</p> <p>14 14th floor, to have told the bridgehead how many people</p> <p>15 were in flat 113, wouldn't it?</p> <p>16 A. Yeah.</p> <p>17 Q. Did you tell them?</p> <p>18 A. I believe we did.</p> <p>19 Q. How many people did you say were in the flat?</p> <p>20 A. I can't remember now.</p> <p>21 Q. Is it possible or likely that you told them that there</p> <p>22 were eight or nine people still within the flat?</p> <p>23 A. I can't remember.</p> <p>24 Q. Can you remember the name of the officer to whom you</p> <p>25 debriefed at the bridgehead?</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 21</p>	<p>1 A. No.</p> <p>2 Q. Could I now ask you a question about training.</p> <p>3 Had you been trained that it was best to leave</p> <p>4 a group of residents on a floor that was already</p> <p>5 smoke-compromised in some flats?</p> <p>6 A. No, I don't think so -- well, we've always been told to</p> <p>7 leave people in their flats.</p> <p>8 Q. Given the nature and extent of the smoke on the</p> <p>9 14th floor, the lobby, given the nature and extent of</p> <p>10 the smoke in the stairwell, and given the smoke</p> <p>11 conditions you'd observed, is it fair to summarise your</p> <p>12 evidence in this way: you considered it was safe to</p> <p>13 leave the occupants of the flats on floor 14 in</p> <p>14 flat 113?</p> <p>15 A. Yeah.</p> <p>16 Q. Did you assume that firefighters would later go up to</p> <p>17 rescue those occupants of flat 113, or did you assume</p> <p>18 that the fire would be extinguished and that the</p> <p>19 residents could evacuate safely in any event?</p> <p>20 A. Our normal high-rise procedure is tell people to stay in</p> <p>21 their flats, put the fire out, and then we'll tell them</p> <p>22 if they need to be evacuated or if they could stay where</p> <p>23 they are.</p> <p>24 Q. If I could press you in answer to the question I put to</p> <p>25 you, did you assume that they would be rescued by</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 23</p>
<p>1 A. No.</p> <p>2 Q. Do you even remember whether it was a man or a woman?</p> <p>3 A. No.</p> <p>4 Q. Were you aware of the other crew, namely Cornelius and</p> <p>5 Murphy, debriefing the officer at the bridgehead?</p> <p>6 A. No, I don't know.</p> <p>7 Q. Paul, would you please turn up the forward information</p> <p>8 board at MET00018749. If that could be expanded.</p> <p>9 This is the forward information board, and you can</p> <p>10 see at the top, flat 113, eight people, 14th floor.</p> <p>11 Do you remember seeing that information being</p> <p>12 written on the board whilst you were present?</p> <p>13 A. No, I don't remember.</p> <p>14 Q. Do you remember anyone writing any information on that</p> <p>15 board after you'd returned from flat 113?</p> <p>16 A. No.</p> <p>17 Q. Paul, would you mind taking that down, and could I ask</p> <p>18 you to turn up MET00013074.</p> <p>19 There you'll see "113 8 people 14 floor", if that</p> <p>20 could be magnified.</p> <p>21 A. Yeah.</p> <p>22 Q. Do you remember seeing that being written on the wall?</p> <p>23 A. No.</p> <p>24 Q. Do you remember Firefighter Cornelius writing anything</p> <p>25 on a wall?</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 22</p>	<p>1 a later crew?</p> <p>2 A. Yes.</p> <p>3 Q. Did you check as to what had in fact happened to them</p> <p>4 after you'd come down?</p> <p>5 A. No.</p> <p>6 Q. Were you made aware later on in the night as to what had</p> <p>7 happened to the occupants of flat 113?</p> <p>8 A. No.</p> <p>9 Q. When did you first find out what had happened?</p> <p>10 A. I still don't know.</p> <p>11 Q. Looking back now, given the state of the smoke on the</p> <p>12 14th floor, in the stairwell, and given the residents</p> <p>13 were coming down before you went up, do you think it</p> <p>14 would've been practical to bring down the occupants of</p> <p>15 flat 113 at the time you came down?</p> <p>16 A. In hindsight, yeah, we could've got everyone out, but,</p> <p>17 again, without any oxygen, I still don't think they</p> <p>18 would've made it down.</p> <p>19 Q. If you'd radioed down for spare BA sets, would it have</p> <p>20 been practicable for a fresh crew to have brought up</p> <p>21 spare BA sets to bring down the occupants of flat 113?</p> <p>22 A. I don't know.</p> <p>23 MR KINNIER: Sir, I've no further questions at this stage.</p> <p>24 Might it be possible, in the usual way, maybe to have</p> <p>25 a short break for 5 minutes to see whether there are any</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 24</p>

<p>1 further questions?</p> <p>2 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Yes, I think that would be a good</p> <p>3 idea.</p> <p>4 We'll have a short break at this stage, Mr Merrion.</p> <p>5 Please don't talk to anyone about your evidence while</p> <p>6 you're out of the room. We'll resume at 10.40.</p> <p>7 That will give you plenty of time, won't it?</p> <p>8 MR KINNIER: Yes.</p> <p>9 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: If you would like to go with the</p> <p>10 usher, please.</p> <p>11 (The witness withdrew)</p> <p>12 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Right, 10.40 then, please.</p> <p>13 (10.33 am)</p> <p>14 (A short break)</p> <p>15 (10.40 am)</p> <p>16 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Yes, Mr Kinnier.</p> <p>17 MR KINNIER: Just three supplemental questions.</p> <p>18 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Shall we have Mr Merrion back.</p> <p>19 (The witness returned)</p> <p>20 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Well, Mr Merrion, I think there are</p> <p>21 just a few further questions that counsel wishes to ask</p> <p>22 you.</p> <p>23 THE WITNESS: Okay.</p> <p>24 MR KINNIER: Mr Merrion, thank you very much, just a few</p> <p>25 more supplementals.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 25</p>	<p>1 A. Because the smoke-logging was so heavy in the stairwell</p> <p>2 at that time, I don't think people would've been able to</p> <p>3 get out safely.</p> <p>4 Q. Finally, you said that you were unaware of what had</p> <p>5 happened to the occupants of flat 113. Have you</p> <p>6 received any briefing from anyone as to what happened in</p> <p>7 flat 113?</p> <p>8 A. No.</p> <p>9 Q. Had you seen any of the publicity in the press following</p> <p>10 the fire?</p> <p>11 A. No.</p> <p>12 Q. Had you seen that Mr Mohammad Alhajali had been the</p> <p>13 first reported fatality in the tower?</p> <p>14 A. No.</p> <p>15 MR KINNIER: Mr Merrion, thank you very much for your</p> <p>16 assistance with coming to the inquiry today. We're very</p> <p>17 grateful for your help. Those are all the questions</p> <p>18 I have for you.</p> <p>19 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: I add my thanks to those of</p> <p>20 Mr Kinnier. It has been very helpful to hear your</p> <p>21 evidence. Thank you very much.</p> <p>22 THE WITNESS: Thank you.</p> <p>23 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: You go with the usher, then, please.</p> <p>24 (The witness was released)</p> <p>25 MR KINNIER: Sir, thank you.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 27</p>
<p>1 First of all, you say in your witness statement that</p> <p>2 there was no positive pressure in the stairwells at the</p> <p>3 tower.</p> <p>4 A. Yes.</p> <p>5 Q. If there had been such positive pressure there, what</p> <p>6 difference do you think it would've made to conditions</p> <p>7 in the stairwell you found on the night?</p> <p>8 A. There would have been a clean stairwell. There would've</p> <p>9 been no smoke in it. Everyone could've walked out.</p> <p>10 Q. And therefore assisted evacuation?</p> <p>11 A. No, they would've been told, "Make your way out, it's</p> <p>12 safe to do so". If the stairwell was clear of smoke</p> <p>13 then ...</p> <p>14 Q. Following on from that question, if your understanding</p> <p>15 of an FSG call is that you are to go up there and advise</p> <p>16 the occupants to stay put, do you have a discretion, say</p> <p>17 when you get up to the particular flat you see</p> <p>18 conditions are such that the best thing to do, the</p> <p>19 safest thing to do, is to bring people down, is that</p> <p>20 a discretion that you have and that you've exercised in</p> <p>21 the past?</p> <p>22 A. Yes.</p> <p>23 Q. It follows on from that question: given that discretion,</p> <p>24 why did you decide not to exercise it here in relation</p> <p>25 to flat 113?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 26</p>	<p>1 The next witness is Mr Desmond Murphy. I don't know</p> <p>2 if there needs to be some domestic rearrangements.</p> <p>3 THE USHER: Yes.</p> <p>4 MR KINNIER: Might I invite --</p> <p>5 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: I think the best thing is I'll rise</p> <p>6 to give you plenty of scope, but would you get the usher</p> <p>7 to tell me as soon as you're ready?</p> <p>8 MR KINNIER: Will do.</p> <p>9 (10.45 am)</p> <p>10 (A short break)</p> <p>11 (10.50 am)</p> <p>12 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Yes. Now, then, Mr Kinnier.</p> <p>13 Mr Murphy, is it?</p> <p>14 MR KINNIER: Sir, Mr Murphy.</p> <p>15 Just before I do, I should formally read into the</p> <p>16 record an exhibit from Mr Merrion's police statement,</p> <p>17 which is MET00015865, which is simply a plan. I do that</p> <p>18 formally now.</p> <p>19 May I call Mr Murphy.</p> <p>20 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Thank you.</p> <p>21 DESMOND MURPHY (sworn)</p> <p>22 Questions by MR KINNIER</p> <p>23 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Thank you very much, Mr Murphy.</p> <p>24 I gather you'd like to give your evidence standing up?</p> <p>25 THE WITNESS: Yes, please.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 28</p>

<p>1 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Yes, of course.</p> <p>2 MR KINNIER: Good morning.</p> <p>3 Would you please confirm your name for the record?</p> <p>4 A. Desmond Murphy.</p> <p>5 Q. Mr Murphy, thank you very much for coming along to give</p> <p>6 evidence today. It's much appreciated.</p> <p>7 In front of you should be a blue folder.</p> <p>8 A. Yes.</p> <p>9 Q. When you open that, there should be your police witness</p> <p>10 statement dated 21 January 2018; is that right?</p> <p>11 A. That's correct, yes.</p> <p>12 Q. Behind that ought to be your contemporaneous note.</p> <p>13 A. Yes.</p> <p>14 Q. Behind that should be two exhibits: the first a plan of</p> <p>15 the tower and it's immediate surroundings and, secondly,</p> <p>16 a plan of the 14th floor itself.</p> <p>17 A. Yes.</p> <p>18 Q. Is that right?</p> <p>19 A. Yes.</p> <p>20 Q. Have you read those documents recently?</p> <p>21 A. Yes, I have, yes.</p> <p>22 Q. Can you confirm their contents are true?</p> <p>23 A. They are true, apart from a couple of the names have</p> <p>24 been misspelt, but the evidence is correct, yes.</p> <p>25 Q. Thank you.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 29</p>	<p>1 flat 111?</p> <p>2 A. That's correct.</p> <p>3 Q. Looking at the timings, the LFB's records indicate that</p> <p>4 you were mobilised at 00.55, you were mobile at 00.56</p> <p>5 and that you were on scene at 01.08. Does that sound</p> <p>6 right to you?</p> <p>7 A. That sounds about correct, yes.</p> <p>8 Q. Turning also to the timings of your deployment under</p> <p>9 air, the LFB records indicate that the SDBA was</p> <p>10 disconnected from the appliance at 01.27. Does that</p> <p>11 sound about right?</p> <p>12 A. Yes.</p> <p>13 Q. And that tally out at the bridgehead was at 01.51.</p> <p>14 A. That's about right, yes.</p> <p>15 Q. Sounds right to you?</p> <p>16 A. Yes.</p> <p>17 Q. Just for those who aren't familiar with the detail of</p> <p>18 timings and the tasks you carried out on the night, the</p> <p>19 time difference between your arrival at 01.08, and the</p> <p>20 disconnection of the SDBA at 01.27, was that the time</p> <p>21 you were deploying the covering jet?</p> <p>22 A. That's correct, yes.</p> <p>23 Q. The second period of time between disconnect at 01.27</p> <p>24 and 01.51, what were you doing in that time period?</p> <p>25 A. Making our way to the bridgehead.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 31</p>
<p>1 Are you content for those documents to stand as your</p> <p>2 evidence to the inquiry?</p> <p>3 A. Yes.</p> <p>4 Q. Mr Murphy, if at any stage you want a break, please do</p> <p>5 say so, there's no problem with that. Also, if at any</p> <p>6 time I ask a question which is unclear, the fault is</p> <p>7 mine, and please ask me to put the question more</p> <p>8 clearly.</p> <p>9 A. Yes.</p> <p>10 Q. If we could start off with some basic information first</p> <p>11 of all.</p> <p>12 At the time of the fire, is it right that you were</p> <p>13 a firefighter based at Kensington?</p> <p>14 A. That's correct, yes.</p> <p>15 Q. How long have you been a firefighter?</p> <p>16 A. 20 years.</p> <p>17 Q. On the night, the call sign of your appliance was</p> <p>18 Golf 331; is that right?</p> <p>19 A. Yes.</p> <p>20 Q. On the night, you worked with Firefighter Cornelius, who</p> <p>21 was your BA partner?</p> <p>22 A. Yes.</p> <p>23 Q. Your watch manager was Watch Manager O'Keeffe?</p> <p>24 A. Yes.</p> <p>25 Q. And he was the watch manager who deployed you to</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 30</p>	<p>1 Q. Thank you.</p> <p>2 The first topic I'd like to discuss with you is just</p> <p>3 the external firefighting you carried out on the night.</p> <p>4 At page 3 of your witness statement, at the first</p> <p>5 substantive paragraph on that page J, six lines down,</p> <p>6 you say:</p> <p>7 "I was told there were crews tackling the fire</p> <p>8 inside of the respective flat so me and FF CORNELIUS</p> <p>9 took the hose from FF BILLS. When there are crews</p> <p>10 within a flat, we are trained to discharge water around</p> <p>11 a window and not into the window as this may affect the</p> <p>12 safety crew inside or cause injury to them. FF</p> <p>13 CORNELIUS and I were hitting the fire around the window</p> <p>14 with water but it was having no effect. The flames were</p> <p>15 continuing to spread ..."</p> <p>16 Presumably you were aiming the fire around the</p> <p>17 window so as to avoid injuring anyone inside?</p> <p>18 A. That correct.</p> <p>19 MR KINNIER: Sir, I have to give a trigger warning at this</p> <p>20 stage. I am showing very briefly a video which shows</p> <p>21 the initial firefighting outside the tower and so the</p> <p>22 tower shows flame --</p> <p>23 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Is this a still photograph?</p> <p>24 MR KINNIER: It's a video. It's a compilation we've seen</p> <p>25 before.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 32</p>

<p>1 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: If anyone feels concerned about 2 seeing a video of the tower, perhaps this would be 3 a good time to leave the room. 4 Well, I don't see anyone moving at the moment. 5 MR KINNIER: No. The video is set up. 6 Mr Murphy, just so I can explain, this is 7 a compilation video put together by one of the inquiry's 8 experts which shows mobile phone footage of the exterior 9 of the tower and shows the initial fire. The 10 purpose of me putting it to you is just so I can see 11 whether certain individuals are you and Firefighter 12 Cornelius, that's all. 13 A. Sure. 14 Q. Paul, if you could set that up. 15 (Video played) 16 Now, you see the jet just started there. 17 (Video played) 18 Now, stopping there. 19 It's always very difficult on these things, but was 20 that the jet you were operating? 21 A. Yes, it is. 22 Q. So the two individuals we saw at the end of the 01.15 23 frame, that was you and Firefighter Cornelius; is that 24 right? 25 A. Yes.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 33</p>	<p>1 back into the building? 2 A. No, I didn't, no. 3 Q. Did you and Firefighter Cornelius have a discussion when 4 you were operating the covering jet as to whether, for 5 example, compartmentation had failed or not? 6 A. Well, we had quite a few discussions, to be honest, 7 because the way the fire was reacting when we first put 8 water onto it was -- it was something I'd never seen 9 before. Initially, when we put the fire, the first time 10 we put the jet on, it felt like we were putting 11 accelerant onto it. It seemed to spread the fire and it 12 seemed to make the fire react very aggressively. It was 13 cracking and popping. 14 Normally a covering jet would be used to push back 15 the heat and fire to stop it jumping to the next floor 16 above, and in this case it wasn't just coming out of the 17 window, the whole of the wall was alight, the whole 18 building was starting to -- the fire was actually 19 creeping up the side of the building. 20 So we had quite a few discussions of shock and 21 disbelief at what we were seeing. It was clearly 22 breached from the window because the fire initially was 23 inside the flat and there was a lot of fire on the 24 outside. 25 But when we first put the jet on, there was flames</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 35</p>
<p>1 Q. Thank you. 2 Now could I ask you about the separate topic of your 3 deployment under air. 4 If I could ask you again to go back to page 3 of 5 your witness statement, it's about eight lines from the 6 bottom of that page, you say this: 7 "WM DOWDEN told FF CORNELIUS and I to move back from 8 the Tower and to go to our vehicle to get breathing 9 apparatus as it was now unsafe to stay in this position. 10 This was the only firefighting I did. In our vehicle we 11 have Standard Duration Breathing Apparatus (SDBA), this 12 is one cylinder of oxygen and provides us with air for 13 approximately 31 minutes. FF CORNELIUS and I left the 14 hose and went to get breathing apparatus." 15 When Watch Manager Dowden was giving you that order, 16 did you have any discussion with him or with Firefighter 17 Cornelius as to whether the fire was penetrating the 18 interior of the building? 19 A. Can you repeat the question? 20 Q. Yes. 21 When Watch Manager Dowden came to direct you to go 22 inside the tower -- 23 A. Yes. 24 Q. -- did you have any conversation with him, first of all, 25 as to whether fire had penetrated into the building or</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 34</p>	<p>1 above the window and there was a lot of heat to the left 2 and down to the left-hand side of the window which 3 seemed to be below the surface, behind the panels. It 4 was very intense heat. 5 To the left of the window was a column that goes 6 right the way to the top of the building. That seemed 7 to be the base of the fire. It seemed to be very 8 intense in there. 9 Q. When you and Firefighter Cornelius were discussing how 10 the fire was moving and developing, did you have any 11 discussion as to how best you or LFB generally could 12 fight the fire in order to contain it? 13 A. Well, as I said, when we put the jet onto the heat, it 14 just seemed to accelerate and it seemed to spread the 15 heat, spread the fire in all directions. It was 16 reacting very violently. 17 I did shout across to Mike Dowden that what we're 18 doing is having no effect, and he said to put it under 19 the window, so that's what we did. Really what that was 20 doing was stopping it spreading downwards. But our 21 concern was putting it around the window onto the fire, 22 it may react in a way that could affect the firefighters 23 inside the compartment. 24 Q. Were you able to have a discussion as to how best to get 25 residents evacuated given the way the fire was</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 36</p>

<p>1 developing?</p> <p>2 A. Not at that point, no, no.</p> <p>3 Q. Could I now turn on to BA entry control. Again, page 3</p> <p>4 of your witness statement, and it's the very last line,</p> <p>5 where you say this:</p> <p>6 "FF CORNELIUS and I spoke with WM O'KEEFE[sic] who</p> <p>7 was in charge of the Bridge Head at that point, I did</p> <p>8 not see any other managers. He tasked us with a Fire</p> <p>9 Survival Guidance (FSG) Search and Rescue on floor 14 to</p> <p>10 locate a male who was in flat 111. This male had called</p> <p>11 for firefighters saying he could not get out of his flat</p> <p>12 and he was told to remain in his flat for firefighters</p> <p>13 to reach him."</p> <p>14 Did you see at this stage a female watch manager at</p> <p>15 the bridgehead?</p> <p>16 A. No. The only officer I saw was Brien O'Keeffe at that</p> <p>17 point.</p> <p>18 Q. Dealing with the substance of the instructions you were</p> <p>19 given by Mr O'Keeffe, were you told to search and</p> <p>20 rescue?</p> <p>21 A. We were told that there was an FSG call to flat 111 on</p> <p>22 the 14th floor. To me, that would indicate find them</p> <p>23 and try and rescue them.</p> <p>24 Q. Did Mr O'Keeffe explicitly use the word "rescue"?</p> <p>25 A. I believe he did, yeah.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 37</p>	<p>1 up the stairwell up to floor 14.</p> <p>2 A. Okay.</p> <p>3 Q. Now, you describe those conditions on page 4 of your</p> <p>4 witness statement in the first substantive paragraph on</p> <p>5 that page.</p> <p>6 As you went up the tower, do you remember people</p> <p>7 coming down?</p> <p>8 A. My only recollection of passing anyone on the stairs was</p> <p>9 on the 7th floor we passed a crew from North Kensington</p> <p>10 on their way down. Smoke conditions were very, very bad</p> <p>11 there. The only reason I recognised one of the</p> <p>12 firefighters, which was Firefighter Badillo, is he's the</p> <p>13 same height as me with a similar sort of stance. So we</p> <p>14 were having difficulty locating what floor we were on</p> <p>15 because of the smoke conditions, and it didn't appear</p> <p>16 that every floor had numbers on the wall. So Dave</p> <p>17 Badillo showed me that underneath the emergency</p> <p>18 lighting, if you put your hand over the lighting and put</p> <p>19 your torch on, there was small numbers underneath. That</p> <p>20 was the 7th floor, so from there upwards we were able to</p> <p>21 gauge our position.</p> <p>22 Q. Do you remember seeing any residents being evacuated?</p> <p>23 A. No, not past that point, no.</p> <p>24 Q. Do you remember seeing any residents evacuating when you</p> <p>25 were in the lobby or at the bridgehead?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 39</p>
<p>1 Q. Even if he hadn't, that would've been your assumption in</p> <p>2 any event?</p> <p>3 A. If someone's calling and they're in difficulty and that</p> <p>4 becomes an FSG call, that either indicates they're</p> <p>5 trapped by the smoke or the fire and they need our</p> <p>6 assistance either to get them to a safer place or to get</p> <p>7 them out.</p> <p>8 Q. What information were you given regarding, for example,</p> <p>9 smoke conditions in the stairs going up to floor 14?</p> <p>10 A. Before we left the bridgehead, none.</p> <p>11 Q. Were you given any information as to smoke conditions on</p> <p>12 floor 14 itself?</p> <p>13 A. No.</p> <p>14 Q. Any detail about smoke/fire within the flats on</p> <p>15 floor 14?</p> <p>16 A. No, at the bridgehead, there was no smoke, it was clear,</p> <p>17 and as we made our way up the building, from about the</p> <p>18 5th floor it became light smoke, and then -- 4th floor</p> <p>19 light smoke, 5th floor became very, very thick acrid</p> <p>20 smoke. Visibility was reduced to nothing.</p> <p>21 Q. Were you given any detail regarding the layout of</p> <p>22 floor 14 where the flats were?</p> <p>23 A. No, there were no plans available and I'd not been in</p> <p>24 the building before that point.</p> <p>25 Q. I'd now like to talk to you about your experiences going</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 38</p>	<p>1 A. To be honest, at the bridgehead I was listening to my</p> <p>2 brief. I was focused on what Watch Manager O'Keeffe was</p> <p>3 giving us. So, no, I didn't.</p> <p>4 Q. Could I ask you about the topic of radio communications</p> <p>5 within the tower on the night.</p> <p>6 A. Yes.</p> <p>7 Q. You say in your statement -- and it's at page 5, we</p> <p>8 don't need to go to it unless you want to -- that the</p> <p>9 radio communications didn't work.</p> <p>10 Just to be clear, did that mean the line was dead or</p> <p>11 just that the line was so busy you couldn't get through</p> <p>12 to entry control or the bridgehead?</p> <p>13 A. The first time we tried to use the communication was on</p> <p>14 the 5th floor when we got into the heavy smoke area. As</p> <p>15 we left the bridgehead, there was a crew of two, myself</p> <p>16 and Firefighter Cornelius, and Watch Manager O'Keeffe</p> <p>17 told us there was another crew of two that were coming</p> <p>18 to the same floor with us. When we got to the 5th floor</p> <p>19 in the smoke, one of the other crew, his ADSU went off.</p> <p>20 They told us they were going to go back down. You have</p> <p>21 to go back to the bridgehead to get it reset. I asked</p> <p>22 Charlie then to communicate with the bridgehead and tell</p> <p>23 them that we are now a crew of two and we are going to</p> <p>24 continue upwards. But there was no communication, comms</p> <p>25 wasn't working.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 40</p>

<p>1 Q. Can you remember at what floor radio comms --</p> <p>2 A. That was the 5th floor, the first time we used it, yeah.</p> <p>3 I also tried with my handheld radio and that didn't</p> <p>4 work. There was nothing.</p> <p>5 Q. You may be following the inquiry anyway and you may have</p> <p>6 seen that firefighters refer to the fact that sometimes</p> <p>7 they carry mobile phones on them even though it's</p> <p>8 perhaps not encouraged.</p> <p>9 Were people carrying mobile phones on that night</p> <p>10 that you saw?</p> <p>11 A. I don't know. I couldn't see the guy that was next to</p> <p>12 me so I didn't notice anyone using a phone, no.</p> <p>13 Q. Did you carry a mobile phone?</p> <p>14 A. No, not on that night.</p> <p>15 Q. Did you see anyone in your crew or any of the guys you</p> <p>16 were with going up to or at floor 14 use or try to use</p> <p>17 a mobile phone?</p> <p>18 A. No, no.</p> <p>19 Q. If I can now turn to the topic of flat 111.</p> <p>20 If I could turn to the bottom of page 4 of your</p> <p>21 statement, you say this:</p> <p>22 "We walked to floor 14, our destination floor. In</p> <p>23 the lobby of floor 14, it was smoky so we shut the door</p> <p>24 to the stairwell to protect the 14th floor lobby and</p> <p>25 minimise smoke entering it. As we did not know the</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 41</p>	<p>1 Q. How did he seem to you physically? How was his</p> <p>2 condition? How would you assess it?</p> <p>3 A. He was conscious and breathing. He was stood up but, as</p> <p>4 I say, he was bent over double with his hand on his</p> <p>5 stomach coughing. So he was struggling a bit, yeah.</p> <p>6 Q. You found him. What did you do next with him?</p> <p>7 A. Well, I asked him, "Are you okay?" and he indicated yes,</p> <p>8 and he shouted out -- we thought he said, "My kids". So</p> <p>9 Charlie, who was beside me, went straight through and to</p> <p>10 search the flat, and he said -- I said, "How many kids?"</p> <p>11 or I asked him how many there were, I can't remember</p> <p>12 exactly what I said. He said, "No, my keys, my keys".</p> <p>13 So Charlie had just literally swept the flat quickly,</p> <p>14 come back out and said there wasn't any kids, because he</p> <p>15 couldn't hear the gentleman talking, and I reiterated</p> <p>16 that it was his keys he was looking for. I said, "You</p> <p>17 won't need your keys, we don't need to worry about</p> <p>18 them". We stepped out of the door into the lobby.</p> <p>19 Q. Did you only go as far as the hallway into flat 111?</p> <p>20 A. Just inside the front door myself, yes.</p> <p>21 Q. From that perspective, how would you assess, first of</p> <p>22 all, the density of the smoke?</p> <p>23 A. It wasn't a safe atmosphere to stay in. There didn't</p> <p>24 appear to be any heat in there. It didn't appear as if</p> <p>25 there was a fire on that floor. Normally if you're</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 43</p>
<p>1 layout of the floor and visibility was poor, I suggested</p> <p>2 to FF CORNELIUS that we do a 'left hand search', a</p> <p>3 search of the floor starting off with the flat that we</p> <p>4 would first find on our LEFT and then moving around the</p> <p>5 floor in a clockwise direction. This is shown on</p> <p>6 Exhibit DM/2."</p> <p>7 If I could ask Paul to bring up exhibit</p> <p>8 MET00013064-1.</p> <p>9 Is this the plan you were referring to there,</p> <p>10 Mr Murphy?</p> <p>11 A. Yes.</p> <p>12 Q. Flat 111 was the first flat you came across; is that</p> <p>13 correct?</p> <p>14 A. Yes.</p> <p>15 Q. You go on at the top of page 5 of your witness statement</p> <p>16 to say that a man came to the door of flat 111.</p> <p>17 Do you recall Mr Murphy soot on his face?</p> <p>18 A. It was considerably smoky in the corridor. When we</p> <p>19 found the flat, I went down onto one knee to check the</p> <p>20 number and force the door with my shoulder, and as</p> <p>21 I went in the gentleman was stood just inside the door.</p> <p>22 He was struggling. He was bent over and coughing.</p> <p>23 Q. Did he have soot on his face?</p> <p>24 A. He did, yes, and his nose, yes. His flat was quite</p> <p>25 heavily smoke-logged.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 42</p>	<p>1 close to the fire, you can feel the radiated heat.</p> <p>2 Obviously we'd just climbed 14 floors carrying lots</p> <p>3 of equipment so we were quite hot ourselves, but it</p> <p>4 didn't appear that there was a fire there, just that it</p> <p>5 was very smoke-logged.</p> <p>6 Q. What was the colour of the smoke, can you remember?</p> <p>7 A. Black. Very dark grey and black.</p> <p>8 Q. So what did you do next?</p> <p>9 A. As we discussed the confusion over the keys, I stepped</p> <p>10 back out into the lobby, and at that point the door next</p> <p>11 to us, which was the next flat, 112, the door opened.</p> <p>12 There were two gentlemen at the door. One was very,</p> <p>13 very calm; the other one was quite distressed and upset,</p> <p>14 and he said, "Please don't leave us".</p> <p>15 Q. If you want a break at any time --</p> <p>16 A. That's fine.</p> <p>17 Q. Are you sure?</p> <p>18 A. Yes.</p> <p>19 Q. Please do say so.</p> <p>20 A. Okay.</p> <p>21 Q. In respect of Mr Murphy from flat 111 --</p> <p>22 A. Yes.</p> <p>23 Q. -- where was he whilst you were having the discussion?</p> <p>24 A. I was holding on to his elbow, supporting him, yes.</p> <p>25 Q. What did you then do?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 44</p>

<p>1 A. I looked over the shoulders of the two gentlemen at 2 flat 112 and I could see behind them that their flat was 3 clear, it was safe air, so I suggested that they step 4 back in and keep the door shut and asked them to take 5 Mr Murphy in with them and close the door and keep it 6 shut. We were going to search the floor and we'd be 7 back for them, which they did. 8 Q. Next I think you went to flat 113 itself; is that right? 9 A. Yes, we continued a left-hand search and we went to the 10 next flat, which was flat 113. 11 Q. Could you just take us through. You found flat 113. 12 What did you do next? 13 A. We knocked and kicked the door, shouted out, "Fire 14 Brigade". The door opened. A gentleman probably in his 15 30s answered the door. It was clean air in there as 16 well. I asked him was he okay. He said yes. I said, 17 "How many people in the flat?" He said, "My partner and 18 my daughter." So I said to them, "Okay, stay in the 19 flat, keep the door closed." He did that, he shut the 20 door and we moved round in a clock-wise direction to 21 flat 114 from there. 22 Q. When you use the phrase "clean air", does that mean 23 absolutely free of smoke? 24 A. Yes, it looked as safe as it does in this room, yes. 25 Q. You'd finished at flat 113. Are you able to remember</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 45</p>	<p>1 and I thought that to put them all into a room so 2 they're safe all together -- we needed to go back down 3 quite soon, so if we got down and gave clear 4 instructions to the next crew where everybody is, it'd 5 be quicker for them to come back up and make a rescue. 6 Q. Stopping there, I think in your statement you say you 7 and Firefighter Cornelius discussed what the best 8 options were; is that right? 9 A. That might not be quite correct. I made the decision 10 and reiterated to Charlie what we were going to do. 11 Q. Can you remember, were the Acton crew with you by that 12 stage? 13 A. No, not at that stage. We were still on our own then. 14 Q. Can you remember whether you discussed your decision 15 with the Acton crew? 16 A. They didn't come onto the floor until we had swept the 17 whole floor and put everybody into flat 113, and as we 18 were leaving, they came onto the floor then, and 19 I explained to them what we'd already done: that we'd 20 searched the whole floor, found eight people and put 21 them into flat 113. 22 Q. Once you had made your decision, were you able to radio 23 through to the bridgehead? 24 A. We tried again. There was no radio communications with 25 the BARIE sets or with our handhelds.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 47</p>
<p>1 how much air you had left at that stage? 2 A. We did a gauge check just at the same time that we -- 3 flat 112 opened. Charlie was doing a gauge check and 4 I was checking as well, and at that point I asked 5 Charlie to try and radio down. I can't remember the 6 figure, but I know we were low on air. We didn't have 7 a lot of air in the tanks then. 8 Q. When you're looking at how much air you have left, are 9 you able to carry out a quick calculation in your head 10 of how much time you have through experience of dealing 11 with BA? 12 A. Yes, you are. Normally our whistle would go off at 13 about -- probably 80 bar. So normally you should be 14 outside the building when your whistle goes off. We 15 were getting close to whistle at that point. But we'd 16 found more than the person we went to find originally 17 and I just wanted to check how many people were on that 18 floor. 19 My thoughts were on the way up: we can't get anyone 20 down this staircase. It's too smoke-logged. It wasn't 21 safe. I didn't know if there was another staircase, so 22 as we were searching around the landing, we were looking 23 in case there was a second staircase at the other side 24 of the building. There wasn't. So I had to try and 25 make a quick decision on what was best for everybody,</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 46</p>	<p>1 Q. Given the conditions you encountered, were you able to 2 form a view as to how many people were on floor 14 at 3 the time you made your decision to move people into 4 flat 113? 5 A. Not until we'd knocked on all of the flats and made 6 contact with the people. We didn't know -- obviously we 7 found the first two flats and then the third one, which 8 was 113. We tried 114. There was no answer there. We 9 kicked the door, shouted out, so we then moved to 115. 10 We found two people in there, a lady and her son. She 11 was very, very frightened, very upset. 12 Q. Had you made the decision that it was best that people 13 be moved to flat 113 before you went to flat 115 or 14 after? 15 A. No, not at that point, because we put -- there were 16 three people in flat 112 which we -- was safe air when 17 we walked away from them, then they shut the door, and 18 in 113 there was three people in there that were in safe 19 air as well. So from that moment, until we searched the 20 rest of the floor, my thoughts were just to check who 21 else is on the floor. 22 Q. Now, before you left, did you ensure that all the 23 occupants of floor 14 were in flat 113? 24 A. Yes, I did, yes. 25 Q. Did you say anything to the occupants of flat 113?</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 48</p>

<p>1 A. When we went to flat 115 and found the lady with her 2 son, she was very frightened and she said, "Please don't 3 leave us alone, don't leave me on my own." 4 My thoughts were then to bring her across the 5 corridor to the flat with the other three people we 6 placed in flat 112. At that point, Charlie was checking 7 flat 116, which was next to that, kicking the door, 8 banging it. There was no answer there. So we were 9 confident then we'd checked all of the flats. 10 So I escorted her and her son across the corridor to 11 flat 112, knocked the door and they opened the door. 12 I looked in and it started to -- it looked smoky in 13 there then. I don't know if that is because they'd been 14 opening and shutting the door or whether there was smoke 15 coming from the outside. So I made the decision then to 16 put them all into the flat next door, which was 113. 17 Q. At that stage, can you describe the smoke conditions in 18 flat 113? 19 A. It was clear. What I would call safe air. 20 Q. You put everyone in flat 113. 21 Before you left to go down back to the bridgehead, 22 did you carry out a headcount or anything like that? 23 A. Yes. Yes. 24 Q. How many people did you count? 25 A. Six adults and two children.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 49</p>	<p>1 A. Yes, we did. Again, it was still very smoky on the 2 stairs. We got to about maybe the 6th floor and we 3 caught up with -- in front of me was a member of the 4 public, it looked like an elderly lady, wearing a BA set 5 with a mask on, and she was being led down by 6 a firefighter who was walking down backwards, holding 7 her hands. So we escorted them down to the bridgehead. 8 It was quite slow progress going down. 9 Q. Apologies, these are lawyer-type questions for which 10 I apologise: can you estimate how long it took you to 11 get down? 12 A. Time-wise, the whole evening is difficult to gauge. 13 I would say to walk down them stairs comfortably in 14 clean air would probably take 5 or 7 minutes. It 15 probably took longer than that because visibility was 16 limited. We were taking one step at a time, feeling our 17 way down. So it could've been maybe 8/9 minutes to walk 18 down. It's difficult to tell. 19 Q. Had smoke conditions in the stairwell deteriorated since 20 you'd gone up? 21 A. No, it was still thick, acrid smoke. We couldn't see 22 our hands in front of our face. 23 Q. Can you remember any obstacles in the stairwell, whether 24 firefighting media or anything else? 25 A. Not that I'm aware, no. Below the 5th floor there were</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 51</p>
<p>1 Q. Were they all within the living room on flat 113, can 2 you remember? 3 A. At that point, I was speaking to the occupier of 113, 4 and as the others had all gone in, they were making 5 their way in through the flat. So I only spoke to them 6 at the door. I didn't go into the building. I was 7 trying to keep the door closed as much as possible to 8 prevent any smoke getting in there. 9 Q. Again, sorry to go back to this, did you give any words 10 before you left -- 11 A. Yes. 12 Q. -- to all the occupants? 13 A. Yes, I did. 14 Q. Can you help us to give as best you can now -- I know 15 it's difficult -- 16 A. I explained to them that our sets -- we were low on air 17 and we needed to go back down to get our cylinders 18 changed. I explained to them if they stay in the flat, 19 keep the door shut, stay in safe air where you are, 20 other crews would be back up to help them. I reassured 21 them we were going to get other crews up. 22 Q. You went back down the stairs. 23 A. Yes. 24 Q. Did you see any residents being evacuated down the 25 stairwell as you went down?</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 50</p>	<p>1 hoses, but not from the 5th floor upwards, I didn't 2 notice anything, no. 3 Q. You got back to the bridgehead. 4 A. Yes. 5 Q. The records indicate that Acton tallied back in at 6 02.15, and your end of wear is 02.19. 7 A. Okay. 8 Q. Did Acton get back ahead of you or after you, can you 9 remember now? 10 A. I don't know. If the other crew that went back down 11 while we were going up the stairs was Acton, as far as 12 I -- I assume that they were the same crew that followed 13 us up when we were leaving the floor, I don't know. 14 With BA sets on and with smoke, it's difficult to see 15 who people are. 16 Q. Did you debrief Mr O'Keeffe at the bridgehead? 17 A. Yes. 18 Q. Again, apologies, it's more than a year after the event, 19 but can you do your best to remember precisely what you 20 said to Mr O'Keeffe? 21 A. I remember exactly what I said. I told him that we 22 found the resident in flat 111. He was in a bad way. 23 We put -- I basically said that we've swept the floor 24 and we found eight people, six adults and two children, 25 and they're all in flat 113 in safe air, but they need</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 52</p>

<p>1 crews up there now and need second sets to get them out</p> <p>2 because the air wasn't safe for anyone to get through</p> <p>3 that.</p> <p>4 Q. You particularly said they need second sets?</p> <p>5 A. Yeah, yeah. I gave that information to Watch Manager</p> <p>6 O'Keeffe, and to the right of -- when we went upstairs,</p> <p>7 the bridgehead was on the 2nd floor. When we came down,</p> <p>8 it had been moved to the 3rd floor. So I gave that</p> <p>9 information to an ADO, I don't know who he was, after</p> <p>10 I told Watch Manager O'Keeffe. And Firefighter</p> <p>11 Cornelius was also giving the information to crews that</p> <p>12 were doing the entry control board.</p> <p>13 Q. You told the lady exactly what you told Watch Manager</p> <p>14 O'Keeffe?</p> <p>15 A. No, it was a gentleman I spoke to.</p> <p>16 Q. Gentleman, sorry.</p> <p>17 A. Yes, I told him exactly where we'd been, what we'd done,</p> <p>18 how many people and where they were, yeah.</p> <p>19 Q. Paul, could you bring up MET00018749.</p> <p>20 Do you recognise this as a forward information</p> <p>21 board?</p> <p>22 A. That is a forward information board, yes.</p> <p>23 Q. You'll see in the top middle, if Paul could amplify</p> <p>24 that, 113, eight people, 14th floor.</p> <p>25 Did you see the forward information board being</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 53</p>	<p>1 you which relate to your initial firefighting measures.</p> <p>2 A. Yes.</p> <p>3 Q. I'll be two minutes. Is that okay?</p> <p>4 A. Yeah, sure.</p> <p>5 Q. You describe flames moving up the tower between the</p> <p>6 panelling. What's the panelling you're referring to</p> <p>7 there?</p> <p>8 A. If you mean where I said it was like a neon light being</p> <p>9 turned on --</p> <p>10 Q. It may be easier if you go back to page 3 of your</p> <p>11 witness statement. It's that chunky paragraph. You'll</p> <p>12 see just below halfway there's a sentence which starts:</p> <p>13 "Within 10-15 seconds we saw the flames move up the</p> <p>14 Tower between the panelling and they lit up the building</p> <p>15 reminding me of neon lights being turned on in a</p> <p>16 vertical line between the panels, with bright white-hot</p> <p>17 glow of fire then spreading rapidly left and right."</p> <p>18 A. What I'm referring to there is to the left of the window</p> <p>19 is almost a triangular-shaped column sticking out the</p> <p>20 building which ran right the way to the top. It seemed</p> <p>21 to travel up through that column.</p> <p>22 Q. Could you see that the panelling itself was alight?</p> <p>23 A. It initially looked as if it was below the surface and</p> <p>24 it was a white glow. As I say, I explained, it was like</p> <p>25 a neon light being turned on.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 55</p>
<p>1 updated with that information?</p> <p>2 A. No, I didn't notice the board, no.</p> <p>3 Q. Paul, if you could take that down, and put up</p> <p>4 MET00013074.</p> <p>5 Now, this is a photograph of a wall. You can see</p> <p>6 there I think it's the floor indicator of the lift.</p> <p>7 Do you remember seeing writing on a wall by a lift</p> <p>8 at any stage?</p> <p>9 A. I noticed that there was writing on the walls. I didn't</p> <p>10 read or look closely at any of it, no.</p> <p>11 Q. Were you aware of Firefighter Cornelius writing any</p> <p>12 information on a wall after you'd come back down?</p> <p>13 A. Not that I'm aware, I don't know.</p> <p>14 Q. Were you aware of any steps that were taken in response</p> <p>15 to the information you'd given at the bridgehead to send</p> <p>16 fresh crews and second sets up?</p> <p>17 A. No, after we'd given that information I was confident it</p> <p>18 was delivered and understood, and I think at that point</p> <p>19 we both needed to get out of the building and</p> <p>20 recuperate, so we left the bridgehead and went outside</p> <p>21 then.</p> <p>22 Q. Were you made aware later in the night what happened to</p> <p>23 the occupants of --</p> <p>24 A. No.</p> <p>25 Q. There's some final questions, Mr Murphy, I just have for</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 54</p>	<p>1 Q. Can you remember whether Watch Manager Dowden would have</p> <p>2 seen that? Would he have been in a position to see</p> <p>3 that?</p> <p>4 A. He was stood to my left and in a position where he could</p> <p>5 see both sides from that corner of the building. If he</p> <p>6 was looking in that direction, he may have seen it,</p> <p>7 I don't know.</p> <p>8 Q. Did you discuss what you had seen in the panelling with</p> <p>9 Mr Dowden?</p> <p>10 A. No, when he gave us our instructions to go and get sets</p> <p>11 on, we did exactly that and left. We didn't stand</p> <p>12 around and discuss anything, no.</p> <p>13 MR KINNIER: Mr Murphy, thanks very much for your patience.</p> <p>14 Sir, might I ask for 5 minutes just to see if there</p> <p>15 are any further questions, or indeed given the time of</p> <p>16 morning --</p> <p>17 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: I wonder whether this would be</p> <p>18 a good moment to have a slightly longer break, if</p> <p>19 Mr Murphy is not in too much of a hurry to get away.</p> <p>20 THE WITNESS: No, that's fine.</p> <p>21 MR KINNIER: Thank you, sir.</p> <p>22 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Shall we do that, and that will give</p> <p>23 you a chance to see whether there are further questions.</p> <p>24 MR KINNIER: Thank you, sir.</p> <p>25 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: We'll have a slightly longer break</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 56</p>

1 now and resume at 11.40.
 2 Please don't talk to anyone else about your evidence
 3 while we're out of the room. We'll start again at
 4 11.40. There may or may not be some more questions at
 5 that stage.
 6 THE WITNESS: Okay, thank you.
 7 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Would you like to go with the usher
 8 then please.
 9 (The witness withdrew)
 10 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: All right. 11.40, then, please.
 11 (11.23 am)
 12 (A short break)
 13 (11.40 am)
 14 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Yes, Mr Kinnier.
 15 MR KINNIER: Thank you. Just a few supplemental questions
 16 for Mr Murphy.
 17 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Right. Well, then, could you ask
 18 him to come back in, please.
 19 (The witness returned)
 20 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Thank you, Mr Murphy. I think there
 21 are just a few more questions to ask you if you wouldn't
 22 mind.
 23 MR KINNIER: Thank you very much for your patience. Just
 24 a few more questions.
 25 First of all, if I could go back to flat 113, before

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1 you went back down to the bridgehead.
 2 **A. Yes.**
 3 Q. Did you advise any or one of the occupants of flat 113
 4 to go into the bedroom? Can you remember that?
 5 **A. Not that I can recall, no.**
 6 Q. Can you recall any of the other firefighters --
 7 Mr Cornelius, for example -- advising the same?
 8 **A. No, no.**
 9 Q. Thank you.
 10 Now, in evidence you mentioned that, when you came
 11 back down to the bridgehead, you advised Mr O'Keeffe
 12 that fresh crews needed to go up with second sets of BA.
 13 Paul, could I ask you to turn up LFB00004828_0164.
 14 If that photograph could be amplified.
 15 Do you recall seeing, as you came down, a resident
 16 being evacuated, protected with a second set of BA in
 17 that way?
 18 **A. Yes, as we come down, I think it was around the 6th or**
 19 **7th floor, we caught up with a resident that was walking**
 20 **down, and a firefighter was walking down backwards in**
 21 **the smoke, leading them down. I don't know if that was**
 22 **the person because it was smoke-logged. We couldn't see**
 23 **very clearly.**
 24 Q. This is around 02.19, so it may tally with you coming
 25 down.

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1 **A. It could well be, yes.**
 2 Q. Just for the sake of finality, that's the second BA set
 3 that you had in mind when you recommended it to
 4 Mr O'Keeffe?
 5 **A. Yes, an independent set for someone else to put on, yes.**
 6 Q. When you met David Badillo when you were going up the
 7 tower, did you know that they were coming down from the
 8 20th floor?
 9 **A. I didn't know where they were coming from, no.**
 10 Q. In what condition were they when you came across
 11 Mr Badillo, Mr Secrett and Mr Dorgu?
 12 **A. They were stressed, very stressed, yeah. I'm pretty**
 13 **sure there was an ADSU going off, the whistle was going.**
 14 **So one of them was on a warning whistle, yes.**
 15 Q. Having seen the condition they were in, how did that
 16 influence your assessment, first of all, as to whether
 17 you could get residents down from floor 14?
 18 **A. I didn't think about that, to be honest. I noticed that**
 19 **they were distressed, so my conversation with Mr Badillo**
 20 **was very short and precise. All I needed to know was**
 21 **how to find out what floor we were on and then I let him**
 22 **go and we carried on our way. I didn't really -- I was**
 23 **focused on our task and they were on their way out.**
 24 Q. One final question, Mr Murphy, is that in flat 113,
 25 obviously there were three adult males. Would it have

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1 been feasible --
 2 **A. You mean originally?**
 3 Q. Yes -- no, sorry --
 4 **A. No, there were two adults and a child.**
 5 Q. Sorry, I wasn't clear. In flat 113, when you left,
 6 there would've been three adult males in there.
 7 **A. Three adult males --**
 8 Q. The Alhajali brothers --
 9 **A. There would've been four adult males. There would've**
 10 **been Mr Murphy from flat 111, the two brothers from 112**
 11 **and the gentleman from 113, which is four adult males,**
 12 **yes.**
 13 Q. I should have been more precise: three younger males.
 14 **A. Erm --**
 15 Q. Excluding Mr Murphy.
 16 **A. Yes, they would've been younger, yes.**
 17 Q. Would it have been feasible to ask them to help the task
 18 of bringing down the other occupants of 113?
 19 **A. I wasn't prepared to take anybody into that stairwell**
 20 **with the smoke conditions. I don't mean to be -- or to**
 21 **upset anyone, but if I'd have taken anyone down, it**
 22 **would've led them to a very early death. It wasn't**
 23 **safe.**
 24 MR KINNIER: Mr Murphy, those are all the questions I have
 25 for you today. Can I conclude by saying many thanks for

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15 (Pages 57 to 60)

<p>1 coming along and contributing so valuably to the</p> <p>2 inquiry.</p> <p>3 THE WITNESS: You're welcome.</p> <p>4 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Yes. It's really helpful to have</p> <p>5 your description of conditions at different points in</p> <p>6 the building when you were there, so that's very good.</p> <p>7 Thank you very much indeed.</p> <p>8 THE WITNESS: You're welcome, thank you.</p> <p>9 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Right, would you like to go with the</p> <p>10 usher, please.</p> <p>11 (The witness was released)</p> <p>12 MR KINNIER: Sir, thank you. There will need to be</p> <p>13 a rearrangement of the domestic furniture. Might I ask</p> <p>14 you to rise briefly so that those changes could be made</p> <p>15 and then, once we're back, I'll call Mr Cornelius.</p> <p>16 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Yes. Well, no doubt the usher can</p> <p>17 tell me as soon as you're ready to resume.</p> <p>18 MR KINNIER: Thank you, sir.</p> <p>19 (11.48 am)</p> <p>20 (A short break)</p> <p>21 (11.56 am)</p> <p>22 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Mr Kinnier, before we take the next</p> <p>23 witness, I understand there's something that Mr Murphy,</p> <p>24 the last witness, would like to say in the context of</p> <p>25 the hearing, so I'm minded to invite him back in to say</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 61</p>	<p>1 Would you like to sit down and make yourself</p> <p>2 comfortable.</p> <p>3 Yes, Mr Kinnier.</p> <p>4 MR KINNIER: Good morning.</p> <p>5 First of all, would you please confirm your name for</p> <p>6 the record.</p> <p>7 A. Charles Cornelius.</p> <p>8 Q. Thank you very much for coming along to give evidence</p> <p>9 today, it's much appreciated.</p> <p>10 You'll see in front of you there, there's a blue</p> <p>11 folder. If you turn over the first tab, hopefully</p> <p>12 you'll find your police statement, which is dated</p> <p>13 4 December last year; is that right?</p> <p>14 A. That's correct.</p> <p>15 Q. If you turn over again, hopefully you'll find your</p> <p>16 contemporaneous note?</p> <p>17 A. Correct.</p> <p>18 Q. If you turn over again, hopefully you'll find the</p> <p>19 exhibit to your police statement, which is a plan of the</p> <p>20 tower and its immediate surroundings?</p> <p>21 A. That right.</p> <p>22 Q. Have you read those documents recently?</p> <p>23 A. I have.</p> <p>24 Q. Do you confirm their contents are true?</p> <p>25 A. I do.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 63</p>
<p>1 it.</p> <p>2 MR KINNIER: Thank you, sir.</p> <p>3 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: All right?</p> <p>4 (The witness returned)</p> <p>5 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Mr Murphy, I understand there's</p> <p>6 something you would like to say before you leave the</p> <p>7 hearing.</p> <p>8 THE WITNESS: Yes, there is, yes.</p> <p>9 I'd just like to say to the family members of</p> <p>10 Denis Murphy, and the family members of the other seven</p> <p>11 residents that I came into contact with on the</p> <p>12 14th floor, I'm very sorry that we couldn't get your</p> <p>13 loved ones out of the building.</p> <p>14 Thank you.</p> <p>15 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: That is very noble of you. Thank</p> <p>16 you very much. Thank you.</p> <p>17 (The witness withdrew)</p> <p>18 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Now, Mr Kinnier, who is our next</p> <p>19 witness?</p> <p>20 MR KINNIER: Sir, with your permission, might I call</p> <p>21 Mr Cornelius.</p> <p>22 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Yes, thank you.</p> <p>23 CHARLES CORNELIUS (sworn)</p> <p>24 Questions by MR KINNIER</p> <p>25 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Thank you very much, Mr Cornelius.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 62</p>	<p>1 Q. Are you content for those documents to stand as your</p> <p>2 evidence to the inquiry?</p> <p>3 A. Yes.</p> <p>4 Q. Mr Cornelius, as I've said to the other witnesses, if at</p> <p>5 any time you require a break, please do say so. It's</p> <p>6 not a problem.</p> <p>7 Perhaps most importantly, if I ask a really unclear</p> <p>8 question, please say so and I'll try to correct that.</p> <p>9 A. Okay.</p> <p>10 Q. Before we start, could we cover a couple of basic</p> <p>11 matters.</p> <p>12 First of all, am I right that at the time of the</p> <p>13 fire you were a firefighter based at Kensington?</p> <p>14 A. That's correct.</p> <p>15 Q. How long have you been a firefighter?</p> <p>16 A. It's about ten years now.</p> <p>17 Q. The call sign of the appliance that you were on on the</p> <p>18 night was Golf 331; is that right?</p> <p>19 A. Golf 331, yes.</p> <p>20 Q. I think on the night you worked with Firefighter</p> <p>21 Murphy --</p> <p>22 A. I did.</p> <p>23 Q. -- who was your BA partner?</p> <p>24 A. Correct.</p> <p>25 Q. Your watch manager was Watch Manager O'Keeffe?</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 64</p>

<p>1 A. Correct.</p> <p>2 Q. And he was the watch manager who deployed you to</p> <p>3 flat 111?</p> <p>4 A. That's right.</p> <p>5 Q. The LFB's records indicate that you mobilised at 00.55,</p> <p>6 you were mobile at 00.56 and that you were on the scene</p> <p>7 at 01.08. Does that sound about right to you?</p> <p>8 A. Yes, sounds about right to me.</p> <p>9 Q. Also based on the LFB records, they indicate that in</p> <p>10 relation to your BA wear, your SDBA was disconnected</p> <p>11 from the appliance at 01.28. Does that sound about</p> <p>12 right?</p> <p>13 A. That sounds about right.</p> <p>14 Q. And tallied out at the bridgehead at 01.51. Is that</p> <p>15 about right?</p> <p>16 A. I'd say so.</p> <p>17 Q. So for those of us who aren't familiar with</p> <p>18 firefighting, in particular the tasks you carried out on</p> <p>19 the evening, the 20 minutes difference between arrival</p> <p>20 at 01.08 and the disconnect of the SDBA from the</p> <p>21 appliance at 01.28, was that the time you were operating</p> <p>22 the covering jet with Firefighter Murphy?</p> <p>23 A. I believe that would be right, yes.</p> <p>24 Q. The next difference of 23 minutes or so between the</p> <p>25 disconnect of the BA and tallying out at 01.51, that was</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 65</p>	<p>1 covering jet you were operating with Mr Murphy?</p> <p>2 A. I would say it looks like it, yeah.</p> <p>3 Q. It's always difficult. You saw two figures at the end</p> <p>4 of the frame. Was that you and Mr Murphy, do you think?</p> <p>5 A. Hard to tell from that, but I would've said yeah.</p> <p>6 Q. Thank you.</p> <p>7 You mention in your statement that Watch Manager</p> <p>8 Dowden deployed you to go into the tower under air due</p> <p>9 to the falling debris.</p> <p>10 Did you have any discussion with Watch Manager</p> <p>11 Dowden as to the fire penetrating into the interior of</p> <p>12 the building before you went in?</p> <p>13 A. We had a quick discussion with Watch Manager Dowden, but</p> <p>14 it was fairly evident what was happening outside. It</p> <p>15 appeared as if the fire was spreading under the</p> <p>16 panelling and the cladding. It wasn't clear whether it</p> <p>17 was actually breaching any other compartments at that</p> <p>18 point. It looked to me as if it was more just under the</p> <p>19 actual cladding going up the side of the building.</p> <p>20 Q. At that time, what were your thoughts about the risk of</p> <p>21 compartmentation failing in the flats within the tower?</p> <p>22 A. To be honest with you, it was hard to sort of gauge what</p> <p>23 was happening. I'd never seen anything like that</p> <p>24 before. I don't think many of us had. So we kind of</p> <p>25 had to go on the limited information that we had from</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 67</p>
<p>1 you making your way from the appliance, through the</p> <p>2 lobby --</p> <p>3 A. To the bridgehead.</p> <p>4 Q. -- and to the bridgehead?</p> <p>5 A. Correct.</p> <p>6 Q. The first topic I'd like to discuss with you today,</p> <p>7 Mr Cornelius, is the external firefighting.</p> <p>8 The first question is: were you told to aim the jet</p> <p>9 only below the window or above the window?</p> <p>10 A. We were told at the time to aim the jet below the</p> <p>11 window.</p> <p>12 MR KINNIER: As before, if I can just give a trigger</p> <p>13 warning. I'm going to ask Paul to put up the Bisby</p> <p>14 compilation again.</p> <p>15 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Yes.</p> <p>16 MR KINNIER: So if anyone would not want to see scenes of</p> <p>17 the initial fire, then perhaps this is the time that</p> <p>18 they should leave.</p> <p>19 (Pause)</p> <p>20 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Well, no one seems to wish to leave,</p> <p>21 so on you go.</p> <p>22 MR KINNIER: Paul, if you wouldn't mind playing the</p> <p>23 compilation.</p> <p>24 (Video Played)</p> <p>25 MR KINNIER: First question, Mr Cornelius: was that the</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 66</p>	<p>1 the outside. But as for it breaching the compartments,</p> <p>2 I wouldn't have been able to tell at that stage whether</p> <p>3 that was a factor.</p> <p>4 Q. At that stage, did you form any thoughts as to what</p> <p>5 measures would have to be taken to evacuate residents</p> <p>6 from the tower?</p> <p>7 A. Not really, no. It was more we were focused on the</p> <p>8 covering jet and trying basically trying to minimise the</p> <p>9 fire spread. But as we put the water on around the</p> <p>10 window and to the side, it was effectively spreading the</p> <p>11 fire rather than containing it.</p> <p>12 Q. I think you say in your statement -- we can go to it if</p> <p>13 needs be, but it's at page 6, the third substantive</p> <p>14 paragraph:</p> <p>15 "... it looked to me like it was the gaps between</p> <p>16 the cladding were alight ..."</p> <p>17 Is that a fair summary of what you saw?</p> <p>18 A. Yeah, that's correct. It wasn't necessarily the actual</p> <p>19 cladding panels that I could see alight; it was the</p> <p>20 areas around it initially. As it developed, it seemed</p> <p>21 that the areas around it or whatever was behind the</p> <p>22 panels were falling off, sort of melting and dropping</p> <p>23 down to where me and Firefighter Murphy were standing on</p> <p>24 the jet.</p> <p>25 Q. In your witness statement, again at the bottom of the</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 68</p>

<p>1 third substantive paragraph at page 6, you say this:</p> <p>2 "From outside you could see that the firefighters</p> <p>3 inside had no idea of what was going on."</p> <p>4 A. Mm.</p> <p>5 Q. Presumably on the outside.</p> <p>6 What was it that they didn't know that they should</p> <p>7 have known?</p> <p>8 A. I mean, yeah, as for not knowing, it may have been</p> <p>9 communicated via radio what was happening, but I would</p> <p>10 imagine from my experience, not many people would've</p> <p>11 expected the fire spread to be happening as quickly or</p> <p>12 in the way it was from inside the building. I certainly</p> <p>13 wouldn't have expected that if I was in there.</p> <p>14 Q. When you went in the tower, whether at the lobby or the</p> <p>15 bridgehead, did you mention the way the fire was</p> <p>16 performing on the exterior to Watch Manager O'Keeffe or</p> <p>17 any other person there?</p> <p>18 A. I think by the time I got in there, Watch Manager</p> <p>19 O'Keeffe was aware of the spread outside. There had</p> <p>20 been a lot of people in and out of the building by that</p> <p>21 point. We did explain what was happening, but he seemed</p> <p>22 to be fairly aware that obviously something wasn't.</p> <p>23 Q. Did you raise with him the specific point that whilst</p> <p>24 you hadn't seen fire penetrate within the building yet,</p> <p>25 is it fair to say that you thought there was a risk of</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 69</p>	<p>1 page.</p> <p>2 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: It will come up on the screen and</p> <p>3 the bit you need is highlighted.</p> <p>4 A. Thank you.</p> <p>5 MR KINNIER: As a general rule of thumb, Mr Cornelius, Paul</p> <p>6 is very quick at bringing up the relevant part, so it's</p> <p>7 always easier to look at the screen.</p> <p>8 In your statement, you say:</p> <p>9 "We were briefed by W/M O'KEEFFE about a fire</p> <p>10 survival guidance (FSG) call at 14th floor, flat 111,</p> <p>11 one gentleman on his own, we then went through the</p> <p>12 normal procedure by repeating the brief to him so that</p> <p>13 he would know that we understood what we were doing</p> <p>14 before we went to the entry control officer, to give him</p> <p>15 our tally."</p> <p>16 Now, first things first: were you told expressly by</p> <p>17 Watch Manager O'Keeffe to search and rescue?</p> <p>18 A. I don't remember the words "search and rescue", but we</p> <p>19 were told it was a fire survival guidance call, and with</p> <p>20 that we would take it upon ourselves to sort of gauge</p> <p>21 the situation when we reached the 14th floor and</p> <p>22 flat 111. I'm not sure, he may have said "search and</p> <p>23 rescue", but I'm not sure exactly.</p> <p>24 Q. Just to assist you on that answer, if I could ask you to</p> <p>25 turn over the page to page 8 of your witness statement,</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 71</p>
<p>1 that happening at the very least?</p> <p>2 A. There was a risk, but at that point we wasn't -- no, we</p> <p>3 didn't know for sure what was happening.</p> <p>4 Q. Can I now turn to a separate topic, and that's going to</p> <p>5 entry control.</p> <p>6 We don't need to go to your statement, but take it</p> <p>7 from me that you say, at page 7 on the first paragraph</p> <p>8 there, that the bridgehead was at the 3rd floor at this</p> <p>9 point when you went in.</p> <p>10 A. Mm.</p> <p>11 Q. Looking back now, do you think that's right? The reason</p> <p>12 I put it to you is that other witnesses have said it was</p> <p>13 on the 2nd floor at that stage?</p> <p>14 A. That could well be the case, yeah. I know the</p> <p>15 bridgehead moved at one point while we were committed to</p> <p>16 the fire, but it probably was the 2nd floor looking</p> <p>17 back, yeah.</p> <p>18 Q. Can you remember whether you saw a female watch manager</p> <p>19 with Watch Manager O'Keeffe at the bridgehead when you</p> <p>20 were deployed?</p> <p>21 A. I didn't at that time, no.</p> <p>22 Q. Could I next turn to the instructions you were given</p> <p>23 just before you were deployed.</p> <p>24 If I could ask you to turn up page 7 of your witness</p> <p>25 statement. It's really the third paragraph on that</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 70</p>	<p>1 and it's about five lines down from the top, you say</p> <p>2 this:</p> <p>3 "My understanding of an FSG call is when someone</p> <p>4 that is trapped in a fire calls the control, the control</p> <p>5 will be on the phone with the individual/s and gives the</p> <p>6 person advice while the control mobilise an appliance to</p> <p>7 go and rescue the individual."</p> <p>8 So, put bluntly, you saw rescue as being part and</p> <p>9 parcel of the job. Is that a fair summary?</p> <p>10 A. It is, yeah. If we thought that was a feasible option,</p> <p>11 then yes.</p> <p>12 Q. At the time you were receiving your instructions from</p> <p>13 Watch Manager O'Keeffe, did he tell you anything further</p> <p>14 about other occupants of other flats on floor 14?</p> <p>15 A. No. At that time, it was one gentleman in flat 111.</p> <p>16 That was all we had to go on.</p> <p>17 Q. So there were no details, I take it from that, of what</p> <p>18 the conditions were like in flat 111?</p> <p>19 A. No.</p> <p>20 Q. You had no details of the condition of the occupant of</p> <p>21 flat 111 either?</p> <p>22 A. No.</p> <p>23 Q. Can you remember whether there was any guidance given,</p> <p>24 a plan or whatever, as to what the precise layout was of</p> <p>25 floor 14?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 72</p>

<p>1 A. No, we had no idea before we got up there.</p> <p>2 Q. Whilst you were in the lobby and the bridgehead waiting</p> <p>3 to be deployed, did you see any residents evacuating?</p> <p>4 A. Whilst we was in the bridgehead, I did see some</p> <p>5 residents being assisted down by firefighters and some</p> <p>6 leaving of their own means. But not many, not a massive</p> <p>7 flow. Maybe four or five.</p> <p>8 Q. Can you remember whether any of those residents you saw</p> <p>9 were coming down with the benefit of a second BA set?</p> <p>10 A. No, not that I saw at that time.</p> <p>11 Q. Can you remember what the physical condition was of the</p> <p>12 residents you saw at this stage while they were coming</p> <p>13 down whilst you were waiting at the bridgehead?</p> <p>14 A. It varied really. There was -- I remember one person</p> <p>15 was over a firefighter's shoulder being brought down and</p> <p>16 wasn't conscious. But there were other people who were</p> <p>17 walking out effectively on their own.</p> <p>18 Q. Seeing such a difference in condition, what thoughts did</p> <p>19 you have as to what the conditions might well be like as</p> <p>20 you travelled up the tower?</p> <p>21 A. It was hard to say, you know. Obviously it's hard to</p> <p>22 gauge where them people had come from, what floors they</p> <p>23 were in or what flats were involved. So we obviously --</p> <p>24 we knew that there was going to be some smoke, but we</p> <p>25 didn't know to what extent at that stage or where the</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 73</p>	<p>1 a couple of people on the stairs early on.</p> <p>2 Q. When you say aided by firefighters, were they coming</p> <p>3 down with the assistance of a second BA set or was it</p> <p>4 simply physical assistance?</p> <p>5 A. I think it was just physical assistance, yeah.</p> <p>6 Q. Now, as you were going up, Mr Murphy said that you met</p> <p>7 Dave Badillo. Do you remember that?</p> <p>8 A. I remember meeting firefighters on the stairs. I didn't</p> <p>9 know at the time that was Dave, but learnt afterwards</p> <p>10 that it was.</p> <p>11 Q. Can you remember, did they say anything to you about</p> <p>12 what they'd experienced?</p> <p>13 A. They -- yes, it was -- again, it's very hard to hear in</p> <p>14 a BA set clearly what's happening. I know that</p> <p>15 Firefighter Murphy and Dave were having a conversation,</p> <p>16 and I think that was with regards to Dave passing</p> <p>17 information about how you could see what floor you were</p> <p>18 on, because it turned out if you sort of covered up the</p> <p>19 light and shined your torch on the wall, you could just</p> <p>20 about tell the floor number that you were on. So</p> <p>21 I think it was more him passing that information on. So</p> <p>22 from that point we could tell which floor we were on.</p> <p>23 Q. Can you remember Mr Badillo saying that they'd come down</p> <p>24 from the 20th floor?</p> <p>25 A. I don't recall that, no.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 75</p>
<p>1 smoke ended.</p> <p>2 Q. Do you remember the Acton crew at the bridgehead?</p> <p>3 A. I don't remember them at the actual bridgehead.</p> <p>4 Subsequently I learnt that they were the crew that</p> <p>5 backed us up, but I don't remember having a conversation</p> <p>6 or seeing them at the actual bridgehead.</p> <p>7 Q. It flows from that, therefore, that you weren't briefed</p> <p>8 by Watch Manager O'Keeffe at the same time, you and the</p> <p>9 Acton crew?</p> <p>10 A. No.</p> <p>11 Q. Were you anywhere near them or did you sense them near</p> <p>12 you when you were receiving your briefing?</p> <p>13 A. To be honest with you, they were probably in close</p> <p>14 proximity if they were backing us up, but I don't recall</p> <p>15 them actually at the bridgehead. The first part I knew</p> <p>16 was when we were going up the stairs and there was</p> <p>17 a crew behind us.</p> <p>18 Q. The next topic I'd like to discuss with you is really</p> <p>19 conditions on the stairwell as you went from the</p> <p>20 bridgehead up to floor 14.</p> <p>21 You say in your statement at page 8 -- we don't need</p> <p>22 to go to it unless you want to -- that you had to make</p> <p>23 way for casualties coming down; is that right?</p> <p>24 A. There were a few casualties being led down by</p> <p>25 firefighters, yeah. Not a lot, but we did pass maybe</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 74</p>	<p>1 Q. Having seen Mr Badillo and the other firefighters, what</p> <p>2 was their condition when you saw them when you</p> <p>3 encountered them on the stairs?</p> <p>4 A. Again, it's very hard to say. With someone with a BA</p> <p>5 set on, it's hard enough to see their face, and with the</p> <p>6 actual smoke that was in the stairwell, it was kind of</p> <p>7 hard to gauge anything, to be totally honest with you.</p> <p>8 Q. It would be useful again for those who aren't</p> <p>9 experienced in firefighting, what kit -- you've got the</p> <p>10 BA set on, you've got that on your shoulders. What do</p> <p>11 you have on your head?</p> <p>12 A. So you wear a face mask. I had a comms -- BARIE, it's</p> <p>13 called, a comms set on, so that has an earpiece and</p> <p>14 a part that sits on the top of your head. Obviously you</p> <p>15 have a helmet as well on top of that, and there's</p> <p>16 a flash hood in between them. So you do lose quite</p> <p>17 a lot of your senses, and hearing is quite impaired.</p> <p>18 Q. Now, you mentioned that you had your radio.</p> <p>19 A. Mm.</p> <p>20 Q. As you went up the stairwell, did you have effective</p> <p>21 radio communications with the bridgehead or, indeed,</p> <p>22 entry control?</p> <p>23 A. I did not, no. I did try fairly early on going up the</p> <p>24 stairs to contact the bridgehead via my radio on my BA</p> <p>25 set, and I also tried via my handheld radio, which --</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 76</p>

<p>1 they're on different channels, and I didn't get</p> <p>2 anything.</p> <p>3 Q. Why did you need to contact them as you were going up?</p> <p>4 A. I just wanted to inform them of our progress and what we</p> <p>5 could see to build up a bit of a better picture at the</p> <p>6 bridgehead of what the conditions were like on the</p> <p>7 stairwell.</p> <p>8 Q. Did you have a mobile phone with you?</p> <p>9 A. I didn't unfortunately, not that night, no.</p> <p>10 Q. Did anyone else on the crew have a mobile phone with</p> <p>11 them?</p> <p>12 A. I don't think Firefighter Murphy did either. I'm not</p> <p>13 sure about the rest of the crew.</p> <p>14 Q. To what extent are radio communications an issue when</p> <p>15 you're fighting high-rise fires in concrete buildings --</p> <p>16 or fires in high-rise concrete buildings, I should say?</p> <p>17 A. Yeah, I mean, obviously it's paramount to have effective</p> <p>18 communications. I hadn't experienced that level of</p> <p>19 difficulty before with the comms. They haven't always</p> <p>20 been perfect; it can be hard sometimes to pick up what</p> <p>21 people are saying and sometimes they don't work.</p> <p>22 Q. Can you remember which floor you were at when you ceased</p> <p>23 to have radio communications?</p> <p>24 A. I'm not sure. It wasn't -- maybe -- I would say</p> <p>25 probably around the 7th/8th floor.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 77</p>	<p>1 A. (Nodded assent).</p> <p>2 Q. How would you describe his physical condition when you</p> <p>3 found him?</p> <p>4 A. The gentleman was conscious and breathing. Not in</p> <p>5 a great condition because he looked like he had taken in</p> <p>6 quite a lot of smoke. He had sort of soot around his</p> <p>7 nose and mouth and face and was coughing quite a lot.</p> <p>8 As soon as we saw the gentleman, we brought him out</p> <p>9 into the clearer air from his flat, because the flat was</p> <p>10 more smoky than the lobby, and that's when I conducted</p> <p>11 a search of his flat because I misheard him and thought</p> <p>12 he said that he had children, kids, inside, which</p> <p>13 transpired to be his keys.</p> <p>14 Q. Given his condition, given the smoke conditions in the</p> <p>15 lobby and the stairwell, would you have been able to get</p> <p>16 him down with the air that you had left in your BA set,</p> <p>17 in your opinion?</p> <p>18 A. No, definitely not, no.</p> <p>19 Q. Why do you say that?</p> <p>20 A. It would've been hard enough for anybody to get down 14</p> <p>21 flights of stairs in that smoke. I mean, the smoke was</p> <p>22 really thick and you couldn't see your hand in front of</p> <p>23 your face, let alone somebody who had already taken in</p> <p>24 a fair amount of smoke and wasn't in the best of health.</p> <p>25 That was why we decided that wasn't a good course of</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 79</p>
<p>1 Q. I think Mr Murphy said 5th floor, if my memory serves</p> <p>2 right.</p> <p>3 A. Yes.</p> <p>4 Q. Could be that?</p> <p>5 A. Quite possibly, yes.</p> <p>6 Q. Thank you.</p> <p>7 Mr Cornelius, I'd now like to turn to when you get</p> <p>8 to floor 14 itself.</p> <p>9 Was the lobby area clearer than the stairwell?</p> <p>10 A. It was, yeah. The lobby area to the flats was a lot</p> <p>11 clearer than the stairs, yes.</p> <p>12 Q. You carried out a search of floor 14. What method of</p> <p>13 search did you employ once you got into the lobby area</p> <p>14 of floor 14?</p> <p>15 A. So before we went through the door to the lobby area, we</p> <p>16 carried out door procedure, which is a fairly standard</p> <p>17 procedure in the Brigade to check conditions inside that</p> <p>18 area.</p> <p>19 Once we got through the door, we saw that it was</p> <p>20 clearer, and before we went in, me and Firefighter</p> <p>21 Murphy decided to follow the left-hand wall.</p> <p>22 Firefighter Murphy went first and I followed him.</p> <p>23 The first flat that we came to on the left-hand wall</p> <p>24 was flat 111 that we were tasked originally to go to.</p> <p>25 Q. Okay. And you found a gentleman in there?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 78</p>	<p>1 action at that time.</p> <p>2 Q. You found Mr Murphy. What happened next?</p> <p>3 A. So I went in, conducted a search of the rest of his flat</p> <p>4 quickly. I couldn't see anybody else. I came back out</p> <p>5 and confirmed that there was no kids inside.</p> <p>6 We then -- once I come back out the flat, a few more</p> <p>7 residents had started to emerge into the lobby area and</p> <p>8 we were trying to reassure them, basically, and gauge</p> <p>9 what flats they had come from. So we continued sort of</p> <p>10 a systematic search of all the other flats, knocking on</p> <p>11 the doors, trying to see who was in or not.</p> <p>12 Q. So from flat 111, you went to 112, 113, 114 and 115; is</p> <p>13 that right?</p> <p>14 A. That's correct.</p> <p>15 Q. Did Mr Murphy at any time go into flat 112, do you</p> <p>16 remember?</p> <p>17 A. I think we may have led Mr Murphy into 112 to take him</p> <p>18 out of the smoke. There was more smoke in the lobby</p> <p>19 area than in flat 112. So initially there was I believe</p> <p>20 two gentlemen in there. We put Mr Murphy in with them</p> <p>21 two.</p> <p>22 Q. How long was Mr Murphy within flat 112, can you</p> <p>23 remember?</p> <p>24 A. I'm not sure of time exactly. Probably a few minutes.</p> <p>25 Q. At this stage, just for the avoidance of doubt, were you</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 80</p>

<p>1 able to have any radio contact with the bridgehead?</p> <p>2 A. I tried constantly to contact the bridgehead, anyone</p> <p>3 downstairs, telling them that we needed second sets and</p> <p>4 what we had found, and that we wasn't going to be able</p> <p>5 to bring the people down the stairs. This is on both of</p> <p>6 my radios. And Firefighter Murphy tried as well. But</p> <p>7 at no point we had anything -- we didn't hear any</p> <p>8 chatter over the radio or anything at all.</p> <p>9 Q. One question that's arisen is: what difference would</p> <p>10 radio contact have made for you at that stage?</p> <p>11 A. For me, it was a big factor. It would have given me</p> <p>12 confidence in what I was telling the people, that we</p> <p>13 could send another crew of firefighters up, or more</p> <p>14 crews, multiple crews, with second sets. That to me</p> <p>15 would've been a key element in saving them, if you like.</p> <p>16 Q. Could I ask you to turn to page 10 of your witness</p> <p>17 statement.</p> <p>18 Mr Cornelius, if at any time you want a break or</p> <p>19 anything, just do shout, don't worry.</p> <p>20 A. Thanks.</p> <p>21 Q. Now, the second paragraph on that page, you say this.</p> <p>22 It's probably easier if I read it out:</p> <p>23 "Our decision to leave the 8 people in flat 113 was</p> <p>24 because of the conditions in the stairwell, where there</p> <p>25 was thick black smoke. If any one of them inhaled the</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 81</p>	<p>1 A. There may well have been, but not that I remember.</p> <p>2 Q. Given what you'd seen about conditions in the lobby, and</p> <p>3 in the flats on floor 14, did you consider that if the</p> <p>4 floor was already smoke-compromised, conditions would</p> <p>5 improve, stay the same, or deteriorate?</p> <p>6 A. It was really hard to sort of judge at the time. The</p> <p>7 lobby did have smoke in, but light smoke. Mr Murphy's</p> <p>8 flat contained more smoke than the lobby area, so it</p> <p>9 was -- it seemed to us that flat 113 was clear, was</p> <p>10 clean air, and that was going to be a much better option</p> <p>11 than leading people into the stairwell.</p> <p>12 Q. Was your decision based solely on your assessment of</p> <p>13 smoke conditions, or was it also informed by the amount</p> <p>14 of air you had left in your BA sets?</p> <p>15 A. I mean, I factored both things into it, but for me the</p> <p>16 option of leading the people down the stairs, that</p> <p>17 wasn't available to me. It wouldn't have been a viable</p> <p>18 option at that point. So really it was smoke.</p> <p>19 Q. In the extract from your witness statement, which</p> <p>20 I quoted, you mentioned that you could go down and get</p> <p>21 another crew to come and help the occupants of flat 113.</p> <p>22 You don't say it there, but you adverted to it in</p> <p>23 your evidence earlier on, would you expect that fresh</p> <p>24 crew to be carrying secondary BA sets with them?</p> <p>25 A. If that's the information that we passed over, which it</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 83</p>
<p>1 smoke, that individual would not last long and pass out.</p> <p>2 I don't think leading 8 people down to the ground floor</p> <p>3 is an option because they can't hold their breath for</p> <p>4 that long, it is just leading them to their death and</p> <p>5 may have led to more bodies in the stairwell blocking</p> <p>6 the way. The better option was to leave them at</p> <p>7 flat 113 where there is clean air and to stay with the</p> <p>8 crew that came to assist while we go and get another</p> <p>9 crew to come and help them, and hoping that the fire</p> <p>10 would be contained in the compartment and conditions get</p> <p>11 better while more help will get to them."</p> <p>12 First of all, Mr Murphy said it was his decision.</p> <p>13 What's your memory of how the decision was made?</p> <p>14 A. I believe that to be correct, yeah. We had a quick</p> <p>15 discussion, but it was Firefighter Murphy's idea and</p> <p>16 I said, "Yeah, I think that sounds good".</p> <p>17 Q. Can you remember -- I realise it's difficult a year or</p> <p>18 so after the event, and lawyers ask these questions --</p> <p>19 the precise words or the gist of the words that</p> <p>20 Mr Murphy used?</p> <p>21 A. I would just be surmising if I was to say that I knew</p> <p>22 the exact words, but I know flat 113 was mentioned and</p> <p>23 it looked like the best option at the time.</p> <p>24 Q. I take from that there was no discussion with the Acton</p> <p>25 crew about that decision?</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 82</p>	<p>1 was, yeah, I would have said that would have been</p> <p>2 a massive benefit to them in aiding the people down the</p> <p>3 stairs.</p> <p>4 Q. Now, how long were you in flat 113 before you left to go</p> <p>5 back down the stairwell?</p> <p>6 A. Not very long. I was more in the lobby area than in the</p> <p>7 actual flat, just checking that we had got everyone that</p> <p>8 we could into the flat.</p> <p>9 So I was probably in the doorway of the flat for not</p> <p>10 a long time, and I just tried to reassure the residents</p> <p>11 that we weren't going and leaving them, that we were</p> <p>12 going down to get more crews up with second sets and</p> <p>13 that -- yeah, that we were doing our best.</p> <p>14 Q. As you were ensuring that you had everyone you could,</p> <p>15 did you carry out a headcount to count how many people</p> <p>16 were going into flat 113?</p> <p>17 A. Personally, no. But it had been mentioned by</p> <p>18 Firefighter Murphy that there was eight people, so we</p> <p>19 went with that at the time.</p> <p>20 Q. Were you talking to the residents as they were going</p> <p>21 from the lobby into flat 113?</p> <p>22 A. I was, yes.</p> <p>23 Q. Could you hear what Firefighter Murphy was saying to</p> <p>24 them, because I think it's right in saying he was within</p> <p>25 the flat?</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 84</p>

<p>1 A. Yeah, I could tell he was having a conversation. As 2 I understand it, he was reiterating, re-affirming the 3 same sort of thing as what I was saying, and we did give 4 advice to the people to close the door and to put 5 bedding at the bottom of the door, and to keep as far 6 away from the door and the smoke as they could at that 7 time. 8 Q. What was the distance between you and Mr Murphy whilst 9 you were standing in the lobby and he was in flat 113? 10 A. Maybe 3 or 4 metres, yes. 11 Q. How clearly were you able to hear what he was saying to 12 the occupants of flat 113? 13 A. Not particularly clearly, no. 14 Q. So is it fair to say you were picking up the gist of 15 what he was saying rather than -- 16 A. Yes. 17 Q. Did you know that the Acton crew had left flat 113 18 shortly after you did? 19 A. I was not aware of that, no. 20 Q. Now, you intimated this earlier on. You say at 21 page 11 -- we can go to it if you want to -- of your 22 witness statement that the absence of communications 23 with the bridgehead made you feel that you were on your 24 own and it was scary. 25 Is that a fair summary of how you felt at the time?</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 85</p>	<p>1 Can you confirm that when you shut the door between 2 the lobby and the stairs on the 14th floor, this 3 prevented smoke from entering the lobby from the 4 stairwell? 5 A. Yeah, that was how I understood it. I got through the 6 door and shut it behind me straight away as I didn't 7 want the smoke contaminating the lobby area. It seemed 8 to be fairly effective. 9 Q. Turning to a separate topic, and that's you going back 10 to the bridgehead from floor 14. 11 Can you remember how much air you had left as you 12 left the lobby of floor 14? 13 A. I'm not sure exactly. I know we done a gauge check and 14 again tried to communicate this, which we couldn't. I'm 15 not sure exactly how much air I had. 16 Q. Had the alarm sounded? 17 A. Not that I recall. It may well have, but it was quite 18 noisy in there. I don't remember if it did or didn't. 19 Q. You say it was quite noisy in there; what was causing 20 the noise? What was it? 21 A. There was people sort of dropping equipment, moving 22 about, I suppose firefighting taking place, people 23 trying to communicate with each others via shouting and 24 things like that. 25 Q. As you were going down the stairwell, did you encounter</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 87</p>
<p>1 A. Yeah. It left you in a predicament, really, with the 2 choice we had to make. So, yeah, I'd say that's 3 probably about right. 4 Q. How did the absence of communication with the bridgehead 5 inform your decision to place the occupants of floor 14 6 in flat 113? 7 A. Yeah. It pretty much left me with no other choice other 8 than to do that. My concern then turned to getting down 9 the stairs as quickly as possible to inform the 10 bridgehead and officers in charge of the situation, 11 rather than hanging about and wasting any more time. 12 Q. Sorry, flowing on, it's not directly to do with floor 14 13 but it's a point you raise which is linked to BA 14 equipment. 15 I think in your statement you consider it would be 16 a good idea for everyone to be trained in the use of 17 EDBA. 18 Would you have made different decisions, do you 19 think, on the night if you'd had EDBA available to you 20 and you'd been trained in its use? 21 A. Probably not. It would've probably given me a little 22 bit more time to think. But I think probably without 23 a second set, it would've been -- without effective 24 communications, it would've been the same outcome. 25 Q. Separate topic now, the question of lobby doors.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 86</p>	<p>1 an evacuee that had been brought down by a firefighter? 2 A. I did, yes. 3 Q. Was she assisted with a secondary BA set? 4 A. I don't know if it was a secondary set or it was a set 5 another firefighter had taken off themselves and placed 6 over the casualty. I can't remember that clearly. 7 Q. You get back down to the bridgehead. Who briefed Watch 8 Manager O'Keeffe on what you'd found? 9 A. Both myself and Firefighter Murphy. We took our face 10 masks off so we could communicate clearly, and we 11 were -- yeah, pretty desperate to explain the situation 12 and what happened. 13 Q. Starting with you -- again, apologies for asking the 14 question -- can you give us as much detail as you can of 15 what you told Watch Manager O'Keeffe? 16 A. Yes. I certainly said where we had been, that we had 17 found the initial flat, and then the number of residents 18 that we had found and the flat that we had put them in, 19 flat 113. 20 I also gave my opinion that we needed second sets up 21 there and the conditions of the stairwell, because 22 sending up another crew the same as us would've been 23 fairly futile. We would've needed second sets to bring 24 the people down. 25 Q. In terms of the number of people within flat 113, did</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 88</p>

1 you break it down to adults and children?

2 **A. I didn't, no, I just gave a total number.**

3 Q. What total did you give?

4 **A. Eight.**

5 Q. You overheard Mr Murphy debrief Mr O'Keeffe.

6 **A. Yes.**

7 Q. Doing the best you can now, what was your memory of what

8 Mr Murphy told Mr O'Keeffe?

9 **A. Effectively the same as what I said. He may also have**

10 **broken it down into sort of the ages and that. But,**

11 **yeah, he basically reiterated the same as what I did.**

12 Q. Do you remember whether the Acton crew had reached the

13 bridgehead ahead of you or not?

14 **A. I didn't, no. The last I saw of the Acton crew, to my**

15 **understanding, was when we left the 14th floor and they**

16 **were still there. I don't remember them after that.**

17 Q. Okay.

18 Paul, could you pull up MET00018749.

19 Do you agree that this is a forward information

20 board?

21 **A. It is, yes.**

22 Q. Do you remember seeing it at the bridgehead on your

23 return from floor 14?

24 **A. I don't remember seeing that at all on the night.**

25 Q. So just to complete the questions, looking at the top

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1 bit of that photograph, you'll see 113, eight people,

2 14th floor. Do you remember that being written on

3 a board at the bridgehead?

4 **A. No.**

5 Q. Could I ask Paul to pull up another document, which is

6 MET00013074.

7 Mr Cornelius, do you recognise that photo?

8 **A. I do. I was shown that by the Metropolitan Police in my**

9 **interview.**

10 Q. First of all, is it a wall at the bridgehead? Is that

11 right?

12 **A. I believe so.**

13 Q. You'll see in the bottom-right quarter there appears to

14 be written 113, eight people, 14th floor.

15 Do you recognise the handwriting?

16 **A. I thought that it possibly is my handwriting, which**

17 **I said to the police, but I couldn't say 100 per cent**

18 **whether that was myself that wrote it or possibly**

19 **somebody else at the bridgehead or entry control**

20 **officer. So I guessed it could've been me, but I'm not**

21 **100 per cent on it.**

22 Q. Do you remember writing anything on a wall at the

23 bridgehead after you'd come down from floor 14?

24 **A. Not with any real certainty, no.**

25 Q. Is it something you are likely to have done?

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1 **A. Possibly. I mean, there is a chance. It looked like my**

2 **handwriting, but there was quite a lot going on at that**

3 **point and we was just trying to communicate where the**

4 **people were and what happened to as many people as**

5 **possible. So I may well have, but I can't remember**

6 **clearly.**

7 Q. Were you aware of what happened, what steps were taken

8 by Mr O'Keeffe, on receiving the information from you

9 and Mr Murphy to send fresh crews up to flat 113?

10 **A. There was a lot going on at that point and we had sort**

11 **of explained the situation to as many people as**

12 **possible. We also explained it to a station manager who**

13 **was at the bridgehead, who I don't know his name. But**

14 **after that we decided to move out of the way and leave**

15 **the building. We needed to sort of get outside and get**

16 **some fresh air.**

17 Q. When you spoke to the station manager, did you pass on

18 to him the same information you passed to Watch Manager

19 O'Keeffe?

20 **A. I did exactly the same, yeah.**

21 Q. Was it you or Mr Murphy or the pair of you?

22 **A. Both of us.**

23 Q. Were you made aware later in the night as to what had

24 happened to the people within flat 113?

25 **A. No.**

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1 Q. When did you first become aware of what had happened?

2 **A. I had sort of heard conflicting information a few weeks**

3 **or months later, but I never really fully got to know**

4 **what happened afterwards.**

5 Q. A final question for you, Mr Cornelius. Thank you for

6 your patience thus far.

7 Paul, could I ask you to put up document

8 MET00000578_1.

9 (Pause)

10 Mr Cornelius, there appear to be reference-related

11 issues this morning.

12 I have no further questions beyond this final one.

13 Sir, that might be an opportune moment for us to try to

14 rectify said reference problems. If I could ask you to

15 rise for 5 minutes.

16 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: We'll take a short break now. There

17 may be more questions, certainly one more question, and

18 we'll see how we get on.

19 Please don't talk to anyone about your evidence

20 while you're out of the room.

21 Shall we say quarter to?

22 MR KINNIER: Yes, or sooner.

23 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: All right. We'll come back as soon

24 as they tell us they're ready to see us.

25 THE WITNESS: Okay.

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23 (Pages 89 to 92)

1 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Would you like to go with the usher,
2 please.
3 (The witness withdrew)
4 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: All right. Well, I'll rise now for
5 long enough to sort out whatever problems there are and
6 for you to consider further questions, and perhaps you'd
7 get the usher to come and tell me when you are ready.
8 MR KINNIER: Will do, sir.
9 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Thank you.
10 (12.40 pm)
11 (A short break)
12 (12.45 pm)
13 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Yes, Mr Kinnier. Have we managed to
14 sort out the technical problem?
15 MR KINNIER: Yes, Mr Weatherby was very kind in pointing out
16 it was entirely my error.
17 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: I'm sure he enjoyed that!
18 MR KINNIER: He didn't disguise his pleasure! Thank you
19 very much.
20 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Well done. Thank you.
21 (The witness returned)
22 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Right, Mr Cornelius, I think just
23 perhaps a few questions.
24 THE WITNESS: Okay.
25 MR KINNIER: Mr Cornelius, as the chair said, just a few

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1 more questions.
2 First of all, had you known the full extent of the
3 fire and the conditions within the stairwell, would you
4 have considered immediate evacuation of the entirety of
5 the 14th floor was necessary?
6 **A. I wouldn't have been able to judge it at that point. It**
7 **would've been hard for me to say until I actually**
8 **reached the 14th floor of what to do.**
9 Q. Were there any occasions when you were deployed in
10 relation to FSGs where automatically you would've taken
11 a second set of BA with you?
12 **A. No, never.**
13 Q. Why is that?
14 **A. It just wasn't the Brigade policy for us to**
15 **automatically take a second set.**
16 Q. Now, with some hesitation about my grip on references,
17 Paul, could I ask you to pull up MET00005788_1. There
18 we go.
19 Now, this shows the 17th floor, and you see an FSG
20 written on the wall written next to "113" on the
21 left-hand side. Paul will magnify that for you.
22 **A. Yes.**
23 Q. Then you can see just slightly to the left of 113 you
24 have "17th floor", looks like "142 FSG". Then below
25 "113" encircled you have "8 people".

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1 Can you remember whether this was on the wall at the
2 bridgehead at the time you debriefed about flat 113?
3 And by that, in particular the record in relation to the
4 17th floor.
5 **A. I don't recall seeing that at all. I know there was**
6 **writing on the wall, but as to what it read, I didn't**
7 **stop to look at it.**
8 MR KINNIER: Thank you.
9 Mr Cornelius, those are all the questions I have for
10 you today. The final thing left for me to say is thank
11 you very much for your help. It's been very much
12 appreciated.
13 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: I'll add to that my own thanks,
14 Mr Cornelius. It's really helpful to hear from people
15 like yourself who were in the tower about conditions at
16 different stages, so we're very grateful to you for
17 coming to tell us.
18 Thank you very much, and now you are free to go.
19 THE WITNESS: Cheers.
20 (The witness was released)
21 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Well, Mr Kinnier.
22 MR KINNIER: Sir, what I was minded to do was to ask you to
23 rise now, and then for us to return, say, at 1.50, if
24 that's possible.
25 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Yes.

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1 MR KINNIER: Then to start with Mr Herrera.
2 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Are we getting slightly behind the
3 timetable?
4 MR KINNIER: No. He says. Maybe false certainty and
5 assurance. But no, we're not. I think the next witness
6 will take perhaps longer than the balance of the three,
7 but we remain on course to finish at 4.30.
8 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Very good. Thank you very much.
9 All right, 1.50, then, please, thank you.
10 (12.50 pm)
11 (The short adjournment)
12 (1.50 pm)
13 MR KINNIER: Sir, may I call Mr Herrera.
14 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Thank you very much.
15 PETER HERRERA (affirmed)
16 Questions by MR KINNIER
17 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Thank you very much, Mr Herrera. Do
18 sit down and make yourself comfortable.
19 THE WITNESS: Thank you.
20 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Yes, Mr Kinnier.
21 MR KINNIER: Good afternoon.
22 Would you please confirm your name for the record?
23 **A. Peter Herrera.**
24 Q. In front of you, you will have a blue folder, and
25 hopefully behind the first tab you will have your police

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24 (Pages 93 to 96)

1 statement, which is dated 30 January this year, and
 2 behind that hopefully you'll find your contemporaneous
 3 note.
 4 **A. Yes.**
 5 Q. Have you read both those documents recently?
 6 **A. This morning, yes.**
 7 Q. Do you confirm their contents are true?
 8 **A. On the police statement, there's a couple of things that**
 9 **are -- they don't fit in exactly, but it's more or less**
 10 **there, yes.**
 11 Q. If you can highlight those when we come to the parts, we
 12 can deal with it then.
 13 Are you content for both those documents to stand as
 14 your evidence to the inquiry?
 15 **A. Yes.**
 16 Q. Could we first deal with some basics.
 17 If at any time you need a break, please say so. If
 18 at any time my questions are unclear, say so and I'll
 19 rephrase them.
 20 As I understand it, at the time of the fire you were
 21 a firefighter based at Lambeth; is that right?
 22 **A. That's correct, yes.**
 23 Q. You have 12 years or so experience a firefighter?
 24 **A. At that time, yes.**
 25 Q. The appliance you were assigned to on that night, the

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1 call sign was Hotel 222?
 2 **A. Hotel 222, yes, correct.**
 3 Q. You were linked with Firefighter Orchard, who was your
 4 BA partner during the course of the evening; is that
 5 right?
 6 **A. She was not riding the fire engine with me. She was**
 7 **a firefighter from Soho fire station and became detached**
 8 **from her crews as she was driving their appliance, and**
 9 **obviously she became my BA partner for that night, yes.**
 10 Q. You were mobilised at 01.37. Does that sound right?
 11 **A. I can't tell you exactly, but I think so, yes.**
 12 Q. There's no precise time for your arrival at the tower,
 13 but we do have the LFB's records of your BA wear.
 14 Your SDBA was disconnected from the appliance at
 15 01.48. Does that sound about right?
 16 **A. That could be right, and that would be the time we**
 17 **arrived because we just took them there and then, yes.**
 18 Q. So next to no time difference between arrival and
 19 disconnection?
 20 **A. Two minutes.**
 21 Q. You tallied out at the bridgehead at 02.26. Does that
 22 sound about right?
 23 **A. Well could be, yes.**
 24 Q. In the intervening half hour or so, what were you doing?
 25 Between disconnection of the SDBA at 01.48 and tallying

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1 out at 02.26?
 2 **A. So tallying out from actually the job itself from where**
 3 **I was committed to the fire?**
 4 Q. You were at the bridgehead, yes.
 5 **A. Oh, at the bridgehead. Could you please repeat? Sorry.**
 6 Q. Yes. The SDBA was disconnected at 01.48.
 7 **A. Yes.**
 8 Q. You tallied out at the bridgehead at 02.26.
 9 **A. So there was no tally in.**
 10 Q. I think you may -- when you left the entry control
 11 point --
 12 **A. Yes.**
 13 Q. -- to go up the tower, that was about 02.26. Does that
 14 sound about right?
 15 **A. It does actually, yes.**
 16 Q. What were you doing in the intervening half hour?
 17 **A. Well, we went to the 14th floor, where we were asked to**
 18 **rescue a family from flat number 113.**
 19 **SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: I think what Mr Kinnier is asking**
 20 **you is what did you do between leaving your appliance --**
 21 **A. Oh, sorry.**
 22 **SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: -- and being committed by the**
 23 **bridgehead.**
 24 **A. Yes. Basically we left the appliance, walked to the**
 25 **tower, and basically we were told by a watch manager who**

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1 **was there by the entrance to either -- one side or the**
 2 **other, and then we were asked to go to the bridgehead to**
 3 **await further ...**
 4 MR KINNIER: Thank you.
 5 Now, the first topic I'd like to discuss with you is
 6 your trip from the lobby to the bridgehead.
 7 **A. Yes.**
 8 Q. Whilst you were at the lobby or around the bridgehead,
 9 did you see any assisted evacuations?
 10 **A. Yes, we did, yes.**
 11 Q. And they included unconscious-looking bodies; is that
 12 right?
 13 **A. That's true, yes.**
 14 Q. Did you see a Paddington crew assisting evacuees out of
 15 the tower?
 16 **A. Yes.**
 17 Q. Did you see this before you were at the bridgehead or
 18 whilst you were already at the bridgehead?
 19 **A. No, this was whilst we were in the lobby area before we**
 20 **made it to the bridgehead.**
 21 Q. Before you went to the bridgehead, do you recall being
 22 briefed in the lobby by Watch Manager Glynn Williams?
 23 **A. No.**
 24 Q. Was your first briefing therefore at the bridgehead?
 25 **A. It was, yes.**

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25 (Pages 97 to 100)

<p>1 Q. Could I ask Paul to turn up MET00005774.</p> <p>2 If you see the screen, Mr Herrera, do you remember</p> <p>3 seeing this wall chart at the lobby entrance?</p> <p>4 A. I remember seeing that wall chart at the lobby entrance</p> <p>5 when I actually left the incident. I didn't take any</p> <p>6 real notice of it as I was exiting, but that was on the</p> <p>7 wall, yes.</p> <p>8 Q. If you can see middle column at the bottom, "113 14th".</p> <p>9 A. Yes.</p> <p>10 Q. For want of a better phrase, did you clock that entry</p> <p>11 whilst you were at the lobby?</p> <p>12 A. No, I didn't, no. Sorry, sorry, I did.</p> <p>13 Q. You did?</p> <p>14 A. I told Watch Manager Glynn Williams whilst I was in the</p> <p>15 lobby, whilst I was exiting, that that flat had been</p> <p>16 searched and it was empty.</p> <p>17 Q. But before you went up?</p> <p>18 A. No, I didn't, no. Not before, no.</p> <p>19 Q. Right, before your deployment to floor 14 --</p> <p>20 A. Before I was deployed, I did not see that at all, no.</p> <p>21 Q. Before you were deployed to floor 14, did you see any</p> <p>22 other firefighters coming down from floor 14?</p> <p>23 A. No.</p> <p>24 Q. Before you were deployed, had you seen any residents</p> <p>25 trying to lower themselves down out of windows?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 101</p>	<p>1 A. She told me that we had to go to the 14th floor. There</p> <p>2 was a family in flat 113 that needed rescuing.</p> <p>3 I actually wrote on the cuff of my -- reflective strip</p> <p>4 on my tunic "113" with a chinagraph pencil. Just for</p> <p>5 peace of mind, 113, it's there, I know where I'm going.</p> <p>6 Q. Are you sure she used the word "rescuing"?</p> <p>7 A. Maybe that's something I added, but, yeah, they</p> <p>8 needed -- yes, rescuing, yes, they needed --</p> <p>9 Q. You understood the point of the exercise was to bring</p> <p>10 down the occupants --</p> <p>11 A. Of 113, yes, of course.</p> <p>12 Q. Do you remember seeing a forward information board</p> <p>13 whilst you were at the bridgehead?</p> <p>14 A. There was one; I didn't look at it.</p> <p>15 Q. If I could ask Paul to draw up MET00018749, which is</p> <p>16 there on the screen.</p> <p>17 Is that the FIB you remember seeing but not reading?</p> <p>18 A. Possibly, but I was told there's a family of three</p> <p>19 people in 113, and going by what I see there, there</p> <p>20 isn't a family of three people.</p> <p>21 Q. You say that Watch Manager De Silvo told you to go to</p> <p>22 the 14th floor.</p> <p>23 In your statement -- you don't need to go to this,</p> <p>24 I'll put it to you -- you say that you were to look for</p> <p>25 a family, an adult male, female and child.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 103</p>
<p>1 A. No.</p> <p>2 Q. Had you heard accounts of them doing so before you were</p> <p>3 deployed?</p> <p>4 A. No.</p> <p>5 Q. The next bit I'd like to talk to you about is the</p> <p>6 bridgehead.</p> <p>7 If I could ask you to turn to page 3 of your witness</p> <p>8 statement.</p> <p>9 Mr Herrera, very helpfully, these come up on the</p> <p>10 screen, and it might be easier to look at the screen.</p> <p>11 If I could ask Paul to put up the final paragraph on</p> <p>12 page 3.</p> <p>13 You say:</p> <p>14 "We left the Bridgehead area/Entry Control Point</p> <p>15 through a door and the conditions changed straight</p> <p>16 away."</p> <p>17 First of all, can you remember on what floor the</p> <p>18 bridgehead was at that stage?</p> <p>19 A. Yes, this is the part of my note that is actually wrong.</p> <p>20 It says on my notes the bridgehead was on the 4th floor</p> <p>21 and it was on the 2nd floor.</p> <p>22 Q. Who briefed you regarding your task?</p> <p>23 A. Watch Manager De Silvo.</p> <p>24 Q. Doing the best you can, what precisely did she say to</p> <p>25 you in explaining the task you were to fulfil?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 102</p>	<p>1 A. That's correct.</p> <p>2 Q. Do you mean a family which consisted of a man, woman and</p> <p>3 child?</p> <p>4 A. That is what I thought, that the family was that, three</p> <p>5 people, and when we got there it became apparent that it</p> <p>6 was a family of three, yes.</p> <p>7 Q. You say, "That is what I thought". There was an element</p> <p>8 of hesitancy in your answer. Have you changed your mind</p> <p>9 subsequently?</p> <p>10 A. No. Subsequently, when we got there and I actually got</p> <p>11 to the door -- before getting there we left the</p> <p>12 bridgehead, and the bridgehead was completely -- from</p> <p>13 the bridgehead onwards, black, thick smoke, you could</p> <p>14 not see --</p> <p>15 Q. If I could stop you there. Just to clarify how many</p> <p>16 occupants there were.</p> <p>17 Could I ask you to turn to your contemporaneous</p> <p>18 note, and roughly halfway down that note you'll see:</p> <p>19 "I & FF Orchard from A24 Soho ..."</p> <p>20 A. "... rigged in BA ..."</p> <p>21 Q. "... in BA went to the 14th floor & rescued 3</p> <p>22 [persons]."</p> <p>23 A. Yes.</p> <p>24 Q. That was your understanding when you were writing the</p> <p>25 contemporaneous notes of how many people you were</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 104</p>

<p>1 directed to rescue?</p> <p>2 A. Yes. Well, writing these contemporaneous notes, it was</p> <p>3 36 hours after the event, after being -- and I was</p> <p>4 slightly tired, but there was a fourth person on that</p> <p>5 floor that came down with us.</p> <p>6 Q. Firefighter Orchard says in her statement that she</p> <p>7 thinks she was told six people were in flat 113 on</p> <p>8 floor 14. Do you remember that at all?</p> <p>9 A. Not at all, no.</p> <p>10 Q. Did you ever take a photograph of your cuff upon which</p> <p>11 you recorded the flat number?</p> <p>12 A. No, not at all.</p> <p>13 Q. Who was your crew manager?</p> <p>14 A. Crew manager? Ben McAlonen.</p> <p>15 Q. Was he behind you or near you when you were briefed</p> <p>16 before you were deployed up the tower?</p> <p>17 A. He possibly could be, but basically we were being moved</p> <p>18 from the lobby to the bridgehead, so I think he got</p> <p>19 deployed after -- I'm not sure whether it was after or</p> <p>20 before. So we wouldn't have been there at the same</p> <p>21 time, most probably.</p> <p>22 Q. You weren't briefed at the same time?</p> <p>23 A. Not the same time, no.</p> <p>24 Q. The next topic is your deployment to floor 14 itself and</p> <p>25 the timings. The phrase we've been using is "tallying</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 105</p>	<p>1 A. No, I don't think so.</p> <p>2 Q. Was the situation that, put bluntly, the line was dead,</p> <p>3 or was it there was so much traffic you couldn't break</p> <p>4 through?</p> <p>5 A. Well, we tried to make contact and you try to get</p> <p>6 through, no answer. You just assume they're busy or</p> <p>7 it's not working.</p> <p>8 Q. Did you have your mobile phone with you?</p> <p>9 A. I did, actually, it was in my pocket.</p> <p>10 Q. Did you use it?</p> <p>11 A. No, I was wearing fire gear and gloves. It would be</p> <p>12 impossible to take that out of your pocket and operate</p> <p>13 a mobile phone. The only reason it was in my pocket is</p> <p>14 it happened to be there and it went up with me.</p> <p>15 Q. When you were actually in the lobby of the 14th floor</p> <p>16 itself, could you make out the door numbers if you went</p> <p>17 up very close to the door itself?</p> <p>18 A. Well, this is why we ended up on the 13th floor. We</p> <p>19 ended up on the 13th floor thinking it was the</p> <p>20 14th floor. We got onto the 13th floor and realised the</p> <p>21 numbers on the doors weren't what we were looking for,</p> <p>22 because we were counting as we went up because we could</p> <p>23 not see numbers on the lobbies themselves, and it became</p> <p>24 apparent we were on the wrong floor. Then we went one</p> <p>25 floor up and found where we needed to be.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 107</p>
<p>1 out".</p> <p>2 A. Okay. I got -- yes.</p> <p>3 Q. Departed. That's 02.26, and tallying back in when you</p> <p>4 returned to the entry control point at 02.47.</p> <p>5 Does that sound about right to you?</p> <p>6 A. Yes, it could be, yes.</p> <p>7 Q. A group consisting of Firefighters Cornelius, Murphy and</p> <p>8 Merrion had returned to the bridgehead at around 02.19</p> <p>9 from the 14th floor.</p> <p>10 Do you remember coming across them when you were at</p> <p>11 the bridgehead?</p> <p>12 A. No, not at all.</p> <p>13 Q. I want to now talk to you about conditions on the</p> <p>14 14th floor itself.</p> <p>15 Was there a difference between the smoke conditions</p> <p>16 you encountered on the 14th floor itself compared to the</p> <p>17 stairwell?</p> <p>18 A. No, it was the same from the bridgehead to the</p> <p>19 14th floor, complete black, thick smoke.</p> <p>20 Q. As you were going up the tower, did you try and use your</p> <p>21 radio, if you had one?</p> <p>22 A. Yes.</p> <p>23 Q. What floor did you try and use your radio?</p> <p>24 A. It could've been on the 13th floor.</p> <p>25 Q. Were you able to get through to the bridgehead?</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 106</p>	<p>1 Q. When you were on the 14th floor itself, was the smoke</p> <p>2 density such that you had to get down on the floor in</p> <p>3 order to sweep round the 14th floor?</p> <p>4 A. There was no need to get on the floor because the smoke</p> <p>5 was ceiling to floor. It was pointless to do that.</p> <p>6 Q. Is it right to say that you met your crew manager and</p> <p>7 Firefighter Juggins on the 14th floor?</p> <p>8 A. Yes, I did, yes.</p> <p>9 Q. You made out the presence of your crew manager by this</p> <p>10 voice; is that right?</p> <p>11 A. It wasn't just his voice, his stature. I know him, I've</p> <p>12 worked with him for a number of years now, and -- yes.</p> <p>13 Q. We discussed with Firefighter Cornelius the kit you were</p> <p>14 wearing on that night.</p> <p>15 To what extent does the kit you have to wear muffle</p> <p>16 voices and affect your hearing?</p> <p>17 A. It does muffle slightly, but you can make out people</p> <p>18 that you do know.</p> <p>19 Q. When you spotted your crew manager, did you ask him what</p> <p>20 flat he was searching for?</p> <p>21 A. When I saw him on the 14th floor, I was outside of 113.</p> <p>22 I said to him "Where have you been?" I think he told</p> <p>23 me, I cannot recall, but I said, "The people we've come</p> <p>24 to get out are in here, they won't open the door."</p> <p>25 Q. What did you do next?</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 108</p>

<p>1 A. Basically we knocked and shouted again, "Fire Brigade, we're here to get you down."</p> <p>2</p> <p>3 Q. If I could ask you to turn to page 4 of your witness</p> <p>4 statement, and it's the bottom paragraph, three lines</p> <p>5 from the bottom, you say this in respect of flat 113,</p> <p>6 the subject of your task:</p> <p>7 "The flat that we had been tasked with, Flat 113,</p> <p>8 I am not sure which of us knocked on the door, maybe it</p> <p>9 was both of us, we were shouting 'fire brigade, we are</p> <p>10 here to get you out'.</p> <p>11 "I think an adult male opened the door, but</p> <p>12 I believe the adult female was the first person we</p> <p>13 assisted out of the flat, so maybe she opened the door."</p> <p>14 Do you recall that the occupiers of flat 113 were</p> <p>15 initially reluctant to open the door?</p> <p>16 A. They were, yes. They were very reluctant to leave,</p> <p>17 basically, because they were in safe air, clean, safe</p> <p>18 air in that flat, and you could see from where we were</p> <p>19 standing in the hallway, in thick, black smoke, you</p> <p>20 could see completely clearly the people, the silhouettes</p> <p>21 and make them out, really.</p> <p>22 Q. Firefighter Orchard, where was she standing when you</p> <p>23 were at the door of flat 113?</p> <p>24 A. I'm not quite sure if she was standing slightly to my</p> <p>25 right or my left. It's either her or Crew Manager</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 109</p>	<p>1 Q. Okay.</p> <p>2 By this stage, how much air did you have?</p> <p>3 A. We did regular gauge checks, but I was pretty confident</p> <p>4 that I was -- we were fine.</p> <p>5 Q. Two of the occupiers of flat 113 sort of describe you as</p> <p>6 being calm but controlled panic. Would that be a fair</p> <p>7 description of your demeanour as you entered the flat?</p> <p>8 A. I could've been calm but forceful, maybe. I wanted to</p> <p>9 get these people out, you know, I weren't going to hang</p> <p>10 around and put myself and other crew members in danger.</p> <p>11 Q. Did any other firefighters come into flat 113 with you?</p> <p>12 A. I really can't answer that, sorry.</p> <p>13 Q. Is that you just don't remember?</p> <p>14 A. I don't remember, no.</p> <p>15 Q. You went into the sitting room of flat 113; is that</p> <p>16 right?</p> <p>17 A. I believe so, yes.</p> <p>18 Q. When you went in there, was it still clean air by the</p> <p>19 time you were in the sitting room?</p> <p>20 A. It was clean, hazy air, because obviously the door has</p> <p>21 been opened and we are letting in smoke.</p> <p>22 Q. Did you carry out a headcount of the people in that</p> <p>23 sitting room?</p> <p>24 A. No.</p> <p>25 Q. Did you form a view as to how many people were in there?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 111</p>
<p>1 McAlonen, so I'm not sure which one was either side of</p> <p>2 me.</p> <p>3 Q. But she was relatively close to you?</p> <p>4 A. Oh, very, yes.</p> <p>5 Q. She says that the occupiers slightly opened the door and</p> <p>6 you effectively made your way through. Is that a fair</p> <p>7 summary of how you gained access to flat 113?</p> <p>8 A. It was, actually, yes.</p> <p>9 Q. How far into flat 113 did you get?</p> <p>10 A. I made my way into what was the lobby/front room to that</p> <p>11 flat, yes, and stood there and tried to assess the</p> <p>12 situation.</p> <p>13 Q. What were the smoke conditions within the flat compared</p> <p>14 to the lobby --</p> <p>15 A. Oh, clean air. They were -- you know, they weren't</p> <p>16 having major difficulties.</p> <p>17 Q. Do you remember saying to your crew manager words to the</p> <p>18 effect, "Ben, there's loads of people in 113, they won't</p> <p>19 come out. They won't open the door, they won't come</p> <p>20 out." Do you remember that?</p> <p>21 A. I said there's people, I don't remember saying loads of</p> <p>22 people, but I possibly could've said that. Loads could</p> <p>23 be one, two, three or four, I don't know.</p> <p>24 Q. What do you mean by "loads"?</p> <p>25 A. That's what I mean.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 110</p>	<p>1 A. Yes, four people. Two adults, two males, one female and</p> <p>2 a child.</p> <p>3 Q. Were lights still illuminated within that sitting room?</p> <p>4 A. No, I don't think so, but you could see through the</p> <p>5 outside of the building being lighter to the dark that</p> <p>6 we were in.</p> <p>7 Q. Could I ask you to turn to page 5 of your witness</p> <p>8 statement, and it's the middle paragraph on that page,</p> <p>9 line 4 onwards.</p> <p>10 You say this:</p> <p>11 "I saw a silhouette inside the flat. I walked into</p> <p>12 the flat, and this 'silhouette' was an adult male,</p> <p>13 I believe he was standing in the lounge area. I said</p> <p>14 'fire brigade, lets go', I asked him was there anyone</p> <p>15 else in the flat, he replied 'no, I am the last one'.</p> <p>16 I then escorted this man out. I did not search the flat</p> <p>17 as this man was clear that there was no one else left in</p> <p>18 the premises."</p> <p>19 Now, can you help us, where in the lounge was the</p> <p>20 silhouette standing?</p> <p>21 A. Well, this basically happened after the father, child</p> <p>22 and mother, it became apparent afterwards -- we got them</p> <p>23 out of the flat. They had left, and that was the</p> <p>24 last --</p> <p>25 Q. Are you certain those three had gone?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 112</p>

<p>1 A. Oh, yes, because I pushed them out the door. I'm not 2 going to -- I pushed them out the door and I handed them 3 over to my colleagues. 4 Q. Had you seen anyone else leave the flat other than those 5 three? 6 A. No. 7 Q. What was the visibility like in the lounge when you saw 8 the silhouette? 9 A. It was clear but hazy. 10 Q. Were you able to make out, for example, eye colour or 11 hair colour? 12 A. No, I wouldn't -- no. 13 Q. What was the noise like in the flat? 14 A. There was no real noise. You know, apart from us 15 breathing with our breathing apparatus and talking, 16 there was no real noise. 17 Q. Did you have your helmet on or off? 18 A. On. 19 Q. What was the distance between you and the man? 20 A. Maybe to where you and I are standing and seated right 21 now, maybe less. 22 Q. How well could you hear him? 23 A. Very well, yes. 24 Q. Could you make out, for example, what accent he had, if 25 he had an accent?</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 113</p>	<p>1 Q. What was the subject matter of that discussion? 2 A. We enter as crews and I was with Firefighter Orchard. 3 Crew Manager McAlonen had left with the female, and then 4 later the father and child had left. It became apparent 5 that Firefighter Jiggins was still standing with me 6 upstairs and I sort of told him that he has to keep with 7 his operative, you know. 8 Q. Now, going back to the conversation you had with the 9 fourth individual, the man in the flat, if I could ask 10 you to turn to your contemporaneous note, which is at 11 MET00005520. 12 You confirmed you've read that recently. Is it fair 13 to say that you don't mention the conversation with this 14 man in that note? 15 A. It is, yes. 16 Q. Given he gave you confirmation there was no one else 17 left in the flat, isn't that a sort of level of detail 18 you'd expect to put in a contemporaneous note, or not? 19 A. No, not really, because the notes were only actions 20 I thought we carried out, it wasn't something I thought 21 was going to be used to record the incident. I thought 22 that was being done in the bridgehead FIB board and what 23 we did. 24 Q. It would appear the first time you mentioned the 25 discussion with the man is in your statement. Is that</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 115</p>
<p>1 A. I could, yes. 2 Q. What accent did he have? 3 A. Middle Eastern. 4 Q. You'd been told there were three people in that flat. 5 A. That's what I believe I was told, yes. 6 Q. There was clearly a fourth person in there. 7 A. Yes. 8 Q. Given there were more people in there than you had been 9 expecting, would that be a trigger for searching around 10 the entirety of the flat to see if anyone else was in 11 there? 12 A. No, not really, because I thought basically that I was 13 misinformed. You know, we were sent to rescue a family, 14 they said three people, it could've been four people. 15 You know, the facts weren't, in my eyes -- weren't, you 16 know -- 17 Q. You're absolutely clear that when you asked whether 18 there was anyone else in the flat, he said, "No, I'm the 19 only one"? 20 A. Yes. 21 Q. Did you ask him to repeat that? 22 A. No, I didn't. 23 Q. It appears as you left flat 113 there was a discussion 24 between you and Firefighter Jiggins; is that right? 25 A. That was, yes.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 114</p>	<p>1 fair? 2 A. No. In my statement, yes. But on that night of the 3 incident, no. 4 Q. To who else did you mention the exchange you had with 5 the man? 6 A. When we left and went back to the bridgehead, that had 7 moved from 2nd floor to the ground-floor lobby, I said 8 to Watch Manager De Silvo that flat 113 was searched and 9 empty. We walked out of the property, out of the lobby 10 through the back door that was there, that's obviously 11 been changed. I mentioned to Watch Manager Williams 12 that that flat was empty, and he obviously on that wall 13 chart you had, he ticked off that flat was cleared. 14 We walked outside to where the ambulance service 15 were treating these casualties and we met the people 16 that we rescued. 17 Q. Now -- 18 A. And he was on the phone to his brother. 19 Q. We'll come on to that separately. 20 A. That's what I'm getting to. 21 Q. We'll come on to that in a few moments. 22 One point I'm asked to make clear on his behalf is 23 the gentleman you were speaking to, his name is 24 Mr Omar Alhajali, and his account is that he never said 25 there was no one else left in the flat. He says there</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 116</p>

<p>1 were several people still behind him in the lounge. 2 What would you say to that? 3 A. No. I could see him clearly. If there were people 4 standing behind him, I would've seen them. I walked 5 into the mid-lounge of the property. 6 Q. He also says that he did not see his brother go out 7 before him, only Mr Talabi, who was the occupant of 8 flat 113. 9 A. Okay. 10 Q. What would be your response to that? 11 A. He didn't see his brother leave? Well ... we were 12 standing in that lobby. I only saw the four people 13 I saw and I asked him, "Let's go, let's go, let's go 14 now, is this everyone?" And I got a yes. I'm not going 15 to hang around. If I've been told that flat has been 16 searched and emptied -- not searched, but you know who's 17 in there, we're there to rescue, the door's open, let's 18 go and I didn't see any other people -- if there were 19 other people, obviously I would've stayed and assisted 20 them to leave that property. 21 Q. Mr Alhajali would want me to suggest to you that the 22 account of that conversation is mistaken. Would your 23 response be effectively that which you've already been 24 provided? 25 A. It must be mistaken by one of our parts, yes.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 117</p>	<p>1 to him 'don't worry I will sort it out'. I started to 2 think, did I miss him as he was praying and on his 3 knees. I can only presume that his brother got left 4 behind, did 'Syrian man' think the mixed race man was 5 his brother and that he initially thought that he had 6 left the flat and only realised the error once outside?" 7 Now, is that a fair summary of the exchange you had 8 with Mr Alhajali outside the tower? 9 A. Yes. 10 Q. The final few sentences of that paragraph where you say 11 you think Mr Alhajali may have confused the mixed-race 12 man with his brother, is that something you thought at 13 the time or is that a subsequent thought you've had? 14 A. No, I thought that at the time when I exchanged 15 conversation with him whilst he's on the mobile phone, 16 and that's when I made it back to the lobby area and 17 told Watch Manager Williams that that floor, that flat, 18 wasn't completely searched and there was an extra 19 person, not more people, to my awareness, that were in 20 that flat and they needed to be assisted. 21 Q. Now, Mr Alhajali says that that conversation didn't take 22 place. 23 A. Which one? 24 Q. The conversation we've just been dealing with now. 25 A. It did.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 119</p>
<p>1 Q. If I could ask you, following on from what you said 2 about the later account -- 3 A. Yes. 4 Q. -- the later discussions after you left the tower. 5 Could I ask you to turn to page 6 of your statement. 6 It's the third paragraph on that page. You say, and 7 this is after you're out of the tower: 8 "As we made our journey down the stairs, we had four 9 residents with us, CM MCALONEN was with the adult female 10 the adult male was carrying the child, the 'Syrian man' 11 [Mr Alhajali] with FF JUGGINS, then myself and FF 12 ORCHARD. The journey down the stairs, was not easy, 13 there were no problems with water ..." 14 You go over the page, and you see at the bottom of 15 page 6 the very last three words are "the Syrian man", 16 then we turn over the page. This is again outside. You 17 say: 18 "... was then talking on his mobile phone. Whether 19 they recognised us or whether it was because we were LFB 20 he then said 'my brother is still in there'. He then 21 went on to say 'I am still on the phone to him, he is on 22 his knees praying'. He also said 'I was mistaken'. 23 I remember saying to CM MCALONEN 'oh fuck'. There seem 24 to be some confusion as I recall 'Syrian man' being very 25 clear earlier that no one else was in the flat. I said</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 118</p>	<p>1 Q. Thank you. 2 Could I retrack our steps and go back to the tower. 3 A. Yes. 4 Q. You came down the tower and you returned to the 5 bridgehead at the end of your mission. 6 Now, to whom did you report when you returned to the 7 bridgehead? 8 A. Watch Manager De Silvo. 9 Q. Doing the best you can now, what did you say to her? 10 A. I told her 113 was searched -- was not searched, was 11 empty, there was no one left. 12 Q. Did you say at the bridgehead that it was empty because 13 that had been confirmed by "the Syrian man" -- 14 A. No, it was confirmed by me. I believed that that was 15 empty. 16 Q. Did you confirm to the bridgehead that you hadn't 17 carried out a final search of flat 113 before you came 18 down? 19 A. This is the whole thing, we weren't told to go and 20 search these flats. We were told there are people 21 waiting to be rescued, to be assisted down. If you were 22 in that situation behind that door waiting to be 23 assisted down, you'd be ready to go. I mean, that's the 24 only way I can see it, you know. If you were in that 25 predicament, open the door, let's go.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 120</p>

<p>1 Q. Could I ask you just to deal with the numbers point.</p> <p>2 A. Yes.</p> <p>3 Q. Could I ask Paul to bring up MET00015824.</p> <p>4 Now, if that could be expanded so that we can see</p> <p>5 the numbers "113 (3 rescues)".</p> <p>6 Sorry, it's really unclear. I apologise,</p> <p>7 Mr Herrera. It's not coming up terribly clearly.</p> <p>8 A. I can see it though.</p> <p>9 Q. Do you have it?</p> <p>10 A. I can see it.</p> <p>11 Q. Yes. There it refers to three rescues.</p> <p>12 Now, obviously you brought down four people.</p> <p>13 A. Yes.</p> <p>14 Q. Do you know who wrote down that information on the wall?</p> <p>15 A. I wouldn't be able to tell you.</p> <p>16 Q. Are you sure you informed the bridgehead that four</p> <p>17 people had come down?</p> <p>18 A. Yes -- no, I informed them that that flat had been</p> <p>19 searched and emptied. The three people, that's the</p> <p>20 information they gave us and they must have been going</p> <p>21 on what they had.</p> <p>22 Q. So at the bridgehead, they didn't know that four people</p> <p>23 had come down as opposed to the three that were the</p> <p>24 subject matter of the FSG?</p> <p>25 A. That's what it seems to be, yes. But I thought that</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 121</p>	<p>1 update them?</p> <p>2 A. Yes, I did.</p> <p>3 Q. Sorry to retrack things, but who did you speak to when</p> <p>4 you went back in?</p> <p>5 A. I spoke to Watch Manager Williams, who was in the lobby</p> <p>6 area, on that board. I said -- I know him, first names,</p> <p>7 he's a friend of mine -- "Glynn, 113, there's still</p> <p>8 a person, I've spoken to the brother, he's on the phone</p> <p>9 to him, there's a person in there that needs to be</p> <p>10 rescued."</p> <p>11 Q. What did he do with that information? First of all, did</p> <p>12 he write it down anywhere?</p> <p>13 A. I'm not sure what he did. I can tell you what he told</p> <p>14 me to do.</p> <p>15 Q. What did he tell you to do?</p> <p>16 A. He told me to put another set on, find someone else, go</p> <p>17 back up there and get them out.</p> <p>18 Q. What did you do then?</p> <p>19 A. I told him I wasn't capable. I was in no condition to.</p> <p>20 Q. Because you'd just come down?</p> <p>21 A. Yes.</p> <p>22 Q. So what did he then do once you said that?</p> <p>23 A. He said go to the bridgehead and tell Watch Manager</p> <p>24 De Silvo that that floor isn't searched and to send</p> <p>25 another crew to rescue that person.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 123</p>
<p>1 wasn't relevant at the time because they were just</p> <p>2 saying that there was a family in there. I didn't know</p> <p>3 that fourth person wasn't a member of that family.</p> <p>4 Q. Paul, could I ask you to turn up MET00015815.</p> <p>5 Do you recall seeing this?</p> <p>6 A. Was that in the lobby area?</p> <p>7 Q. At the bridgehead.</p> <p>8 A. No, I don't remember seeing that, sorry.</p> <p>9 Q. Do you remember seeing Group Manager Williams?</p> <p>10 A. That is in the lobby, then, if that is there, not the</p> <p>11 bridgehead.</p> <p>12 Q. If we look in the right-hand column, that has "112", it</p> <p>13 looks, "14", then "8P".</p> <p>14 A. Mm, yes, I can see what you're showing me, yes.</p> <p>15 Q. Did you see Group Manager Williams --</p> <p>16 A. Watch manager.</p> <p>17 Q. Sorry -- Watch Manager Williams, write that?</p> <p>18 A. No.</p> <p>19 Q. Did you see anyone write that?</p> <p>20 A. No.</p> <p>21 Q. Did you see Watch Manager De Silvo write anything?</p> <p>22 A. No.</p> <p>23 Q. After you'd met the "Syrian man" outside the tower --</p> <p>24 A. Yes.</p> <p>25 Q. -- is it right that you went back into the tower to</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 122</p>	<p>1 Q. Okay. So you went up to her; is that right?</p> <p>2 A. Yes.</p> <p>3 Q. What did she do with that information?</p> <p>4 A. I won't be able to tell you. I just passed it on.</p> <p>5 I didn't stay around to --</p> <p>6 Q. Let's take it stage by stage. She passed it on. Did</p> <p>7 she write it down on anything?</p> <p>8 A. I don't know. I passed the information to her. I don't</p> <p>9 know what she did with it.</p> <p>10 Q. Okay.</p> <p>11 Now, later on in the evening, is it right that you</p> <p>12 joined up with your crew to recuperate, so your crew</p> <p>13 manager, Firefighters Juggins, Orchard, Evans and</p> <p>14 Bloxham?</p> <p>15 A. Yes.</p> <p>16 Q. That was outside the leisure centre; is that right?</p> <p>17 A. Yes, it was.</p> <p>18 Q. Did you tell them about the further information you'd</p> <p>19 gathered from Mr Alhajali?</p> <p>20 A. Well, Crew Manager McAlonen was present when this was</p> <p>21 all happening. He suggested to me to go back and inform</p> <p>22 them that there was a person still left in that flat.</p> <p>23 Because he was there whilst we walked out, we recognised</p> <p>24 the people, "Oh, that's" -- and then we realised there</p> <p>25 was an error.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 124</p>

<p>1 Q. Were you aware on the night itself of the efforts of</p> <p>2 Mr Alhajali trying to get back into the tower?</p> <p>3 A. No.</p> <p>4 Q. Were you aware of any other FSG calls in relation to</p> <p>5 flat 113 later on in the night?</p> <p>6 A. No.</p> <p>7 Q. When did you first become aware of what had happened to</p> <p>8 the occupants of flat 113?</p> <p>9 A. I became aware of the occupant, not occupants, that</p> <p>10 evening, watching the television.</p> <p>11 Q. Did you discuss it with your crewmates back at Lambeth</p> <p>12 once you'd found out that information?</p> <p>13 A. I was at home at that time and I phoned Crew Manager</p> <p>14 McAlonen and said, "Have you seen what's on the news?"</p> <p>15 And he said, "Yes, I have."</p> <p>16 Q. Thank you.</p> <p>17 There's a final topic of matters very different to</p> <p>18 the ones we've just been discussing I'd like to discuss</p> <p>19 with you. It's a technical matter and it's raised at</p> <p>20 page 4 of your statement. I don't necessarily need to</p> <p>21 take you to it, but you describe how leaky feeders can</p> <p>22 assist with comms but are more suitable for the</p> <p>23 underground.</p> <p>24 First of all, what is a leaky feeder?</p> <p>25 A. Basically a booster box, leaky feeder or a booster box.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 125</p>	<p>1 Q. Why do you think the watch manager wanted fresh wearers?</p> <p>2 A. Obviously you're fresh, you're basically -- we're spent,</p> <p>3 basically.</p> <p>4 MR KINNIER: Thank you.</p> <p>5 Mr Herrera, thank you. Those are all the questions</p> <p>6 I have for you at the moment.</p> <p>7 Sir, might I ask for a 5-minute break to see if</p> <p>8 there are any final questions?</p> <p>9 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Yes. Is 5 minutes going to be long</p> <p>10 enough?</p> <p>11 MR KINNIER: I think so.</p> <p>12 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: All right.</p> <p>13 We are going to have a short break now, Mr Herrera,</p> <p>14 so that Mr Kinnier can consider whether there's any</p> <p>15 other ground that he needs to cover.</p> <p>16 So we'll rise now. I think I am going to say we'll</p> <p>17 resume at 2.40. Is that all right?</p> <p>18 MR KINNIER: Yes.</p> <p>19 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Please don't talk to anyone about</p> <p>20 your evidence while you're out of the room, and we'll</p> <p>21 come back, as I say, at 2.40 to see if there are further</p> <p>22 questions.</p> <p>23 THE WITNESS: Thank you.</p> <p>24 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: If you would like to go with the</p> <p>25 usher.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 127</p>
<p>1 You can place them and it will help with comms. Just</p> <p>2 boost the signal.</p> <p>3 Q. Why are they more appropriate underground as opposed to</p> <p>4 overground?</p> <p>5 A. I wouldn't say it's more appropriate, but they do work</p> <p>6 well in areas where you don't have a signal.</p> <p>7 Q. Do you know whether any were available or used at</p> <p>8 Grenfell Tower on the night of the fire?</p> <p>9 A. I wouldn't be able to tell you.</p> <p>10 Q. Can you explain, what is a radio repeater? Is that</p> <p>11 different to a leaky feeder?</p> <p>12 A. They're very similar. I think leaky feeders can be used</p> <p>13 with cables to connect one to another. The radio</p> <p>14 repeater is slightly different.</p> <p>15 Q. In the sense it can't be connected to other devices; is</p> <p>16 that right? Okay.</p> <p>17 Do you know whether there were radio repeaters in</p> <p>18 use?</p> <p>19 A. I wouldn't be able to tell you.</p> <p>20 Q. You explained in your statement how you attempted to go</p> <p>21 back into the tower for a second time.</p> <p>22 A. Yes.</p> <p>23 Q. You were prevented from doing so by a watch manager</p> <p>24 because you'd already been in once.</p> <p>25 A. Yes.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 126</p>	<p>1 (The witness withdrew)</p> <p>2 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: All right, 2.40, then, please.</p> <p>3 MR KINNIER: Thank you, sir.</p> <p>4 (2.33 pm)</p> <p>5 (A short break)</p> <p>6 (2.40 pm)</p> <p>7 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Yes, Mr Kinnier, a few more</p> <p>8 questions?</p> <p>9 MR KINNIER: There are, sir.</p> <p>10 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Yes.</p> <p>11 (The witness returned)</p> <p>12 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Yes, Mr Herrera, I think Mr Kinnier</p> <p>13 does have a few more questions.</p> <p>14 MR KINNIER: Mr Herrera, thank you very much for coming</p> <p>15 back, just a few more questions.</p> <p>16 First of all, are you aware of the terms of</p> <p>17 policy 803, search and rescue procedures?</p> <p>18 A. I must be aware, yes.</p> <p>19 Q. Are you aware?</p> <p>20 A. Yes.</p> <p>21 Q. Are you aware of the provision that where a casualty is</p> <p>22 discovered, it's necessary to perform a secondary sweep</p> <p>23 of the immediate vicinity? Are you aware of that</p> <p>24 provision?</p> <p>25 A. Yes, but this wasn't a standard search and rescue; this</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 128</p>

1 was just like an FSG, "Go to that property, these people
2 are waiting for you". It wasn't a casualty sweep. This
3 wasn't a standard: I'm going into a flat where people
4 may be or may not be and I'm searching for them; they
5 are waiting to be rescued.

6 Q. You said you saw the family of three leave.

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Where were you when you saw them leave?

9 A. I was by the door. I actually pushed them towards the
10 exit.

11 Q. So at the flat entrance door?

12 A. Yes, or standing in and pushed toward the exit where
13 they're helped along.

14 Q. Did you see from where within the flat those three had
15 come from?

16 A. They were actually by the entrance.

17 Q. Could the position be that they'd come from the bedroom?

18 A. I can't answer that, sorry.

19 Q. Just to get the chronology right, did you see those
20 three leave, then did you re-enter the flat and that's
21 when you saw the silhouette? Is that the time sequence?

22 A. I didn't exit completely. I was always in that hallway
23 entrance to the flat. I went to the door. I didn't
24 actually physically leave the flat until I physically
25 left with the last gentleman.

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1 no need to check to see if I had enough air.

2 Q. At that time, given the conditions you'd encountered on
3 the way up and in the lobby, were you yourself concerned
4 to get down as soon as you could safely?

5 A. Slightly, yes, yes.

6 Q. Did that inform the approach you took to getting the
7 people out of flat 113?

8 A. The approach I took was -- yeah, rapid, I wanted these
9 people out of there quickly, because we are in a thick,
10 black smoke-logged lobby, and it's flammable gases. It
11 could go wrong at any time. I just wanted us and the
12 people we were rescuing out of that property as quickly
13 as possible.

14 Q. Did you have time, given the size of flat 113, to look
15 into the bedroom and the other rooms?

16 A. I possibly could've, yes.

17 Do you want to know why I did not do it?

18 Q. Yes.

19 A. I assumed there was no one in there to search and look
20 for.

21 Q. On the basis of what you say you were told?

22 A. Yes.

23 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Can I ask this: as far as you were
24 aware, were you the last person to leave the flat?

25 A. I was the last person to leave the flat, yes.

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1 Q. You said earlier on that you were in the middle of the
2 lounge.

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. So at some stage you went from the exit into the middle
5 of the lounge.

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. My question is: did you do that after the family of
8 three had left or before they left?

9 A. I'm not sure. It could be after they left.

10 Q. Now, Mr Alhajali would want me to say that you didn't
11 come into the lounge, that you weren't in the middle of
12 the lounge.

13 What would you say to that? What would be your
14 response?

15 A. I was there that night. I know what I did. I was --
16 I spoke to the gentleman. He was there. I was there.
17 I didn't make this up. I was there in the lounge with
18 him.

19 Q. After you had your conversation with Mr Alhajali, did
20 you have sufficient air to allow you to conduct a search
21 of the remainder of the flat, so the bedroom, the
22 kitchen and any other areas?

23 A. I most probably did. I wouldn't be able to tell you now
24 because I didn't check, because in my mind that was the
25 last person, we were exiting and we were going, so I had

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1 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: So the --

2 A. As far as I was aware.

3 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: -- person you were talking to, who
4 you say told you that there was no one else, left in
5 front of you?

6 A. Left in front of me. Yes, sir. No one left behind me.
7 I left, Firefighter Juggins left down -- I left the
8 property. Firefighter Juggins, who was outside,
9 followed on and then we left, Firefighter Orchard and
10 myself, we both left and followed down, waiting for
11 someone in that party to fall, to be collected, to be
12 assisted. In my mind, I was the last person to leave
13 that property, yes.

14 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Thank you.

15 MR KINNIER: As the last person to leave that property,
16 whilst it was just you, did you hear any noise come from
17 any of the rooms within that flat?

18 A. No.

19 Q. And --

20 A. And I did shout loudly, "Fire Brigade, come on, let's
21 go, let's go, let's go, let's go now." Very, very
22 loudly.

23 Q. Could I now turn to the discussion you had with
24 Mr Juggins.

25 Did Mr Juggins offer to do a search of a flat on

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33 (Pages 129 to 132)

1 floor 14, or floor 14 the lobby itself?

2 **A. No, Firefighter Juggins stayed with me when I believed**

3 **he should've gone with his BA wearer as a team, he**

4 **should've left. He said to me -- I said, "What are you**

5 **doing here?" He said, "I'm staying with you because**

6 **I want to search and find more people." I said, "No, go**

7 **and leave with Ben."**

8 **Maybe I used different language, but it was down**

9 **those lines.**

10 Q. Before you left that flat, how would you describe your

11 visibility?

12 **A. Very, very, very poor. In the hallway, very poor.**

13 Q. As you were on the threshold, what was the visibility

14 looking into the flat?

15 **A. You could look into the flat. You could see. It was**

16 **clear. Reasonably clean air. Obviously the door had**

17 **been open for some time now, maybe 5 minutes, 10 minutes**

18 **maybe, and obviously that smoke was seeping in. But you**

19 **could still see. It was perfectly ...**

20 Q. Given that people were found in flat 113 --

21 **A. What do you mean by found, sorry?**

22 Q. Later on.

23 **A. I wasn't aware of that.**

24 Q. I suppose the ultimate point is: why didn't you see them

25 if they were in there, if you'd looked properly?

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1 **A. That's the thing, I didn't see them. They weren't**

2 **there. And especially I'm being told that he was the**

3 **last person, there was no need to look. From my point**

4 **of view, no, that flat was empty.**

5 Q. Beyond talking to your crew manager about the

6 discussions you'd had with who you described as "the

7 Syrian man" in your witness statement, did you discuss

8 those conversations with any other officer, more senior

9 officer, at Lambeth or elsewhere?

10 **A. After the incident?**

11 Q. Yes.

12 **A. Yes.**

13 Q. Who was that?

14 **A. All our incidents are usually discussed and brought**

15 **around the mess table, so all the watch would've been**

16 **aware of what happened on that night.**

17 MR KINNIER: Mr Herrera, thank you very much for your

18 evidence today.

19 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

20 MR KINNIER: Thank you, sir.

21 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: I thank you as well for coming to

22 give your evidence. It's valuable and we're grateful to

23 you.

24 THE WITNESS: Thank you very much.

25 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Thank you very much.

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1 THE WITNESS: Can I say a few words, please?

2 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Yes.

3 THE WITNESS: What we did on that night wasn't just -- it's

4 a team effort, and I'm very, very, very sorry if I've

5 let anyone down or not done what was expected of me.

6 I'm very sorry.

7 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Thank you very much.

8 Would you like to go with the usher now.

9 (The witness was released)

10 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Yes, Mr Kinnier.

11 MR KINNIER: Sir, may I call the next witness, who is

12 Firefighter Nikki Upton.

13 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Yes. As far as you know, the

14 present arrangements --

15 MR KINNIER: Just paperwork.

16 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: I'll sit here while the paperwork is

17 organised.

18 (Pause)

19 NIKKI UPTON (affirmed)

20 Questions by MR KINNIER

21 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Thank you very much, Ms Upton. Sit

22 down and make yourself comfortable. All right?

23 Yes, Mr Kinnier.

24 MR KINNIER: Good afternoon.

25 First of all, could you confirm your name for the

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1 record, please.

2 **A. Nikki Upton.**

3 Q. Thank you very much for coming along to give evidence

4 today.

5 In front of you, you have a blue folder. Behind the

6 first tab is hopefully your statement dated

7 20 October 2017.

8 **A. Yes.**

9 Q. And behind the next tab hopefully is your

10 contemporaneous note.

11 **A. Mm-hm.**

12 Q. Behind that hopefully then two exhibits that were

13 attached to your statement. Is that right?

14 **A. Yes.**

15 Q. Have you read those documents recently?

16 **A. Yes.**

17 Q. Do you confirm their contents are true?

18 **A. To what I believe to be true, yes.**

19 Q. Are you content for those documents to stand as your

20 evidence to the inquiry?

21 **A. Yes.**

22 Q. First of all, could I just establish some basic details.

23 First of all, at the time of the fire you were based

24 at Chelsea; is that right?

25 **A. Yes, correct.**

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34 (Pages 133 to 136)

<p>1 Q. You had had seven years' experience with the LFB?</p> <p>2 A. Yes.</p> <p>3 Q. On the night, you were the driver of Chelsea's FRU unit?</p> <p>4 A. Yes.</p> <p>5 Q. And the call sign for that is Golf 346?</p> <p>6 A. Yes.</p> <p>7 Q. The other people on the FRU were your BA partner</p> <p>8 Mr Reddington --</p> <p>9 A. Mm.</p> <p>10 Q. -- Mr Codd --</p> <p>11 A. Yes.</p> <p>12 Q. -- Mr Sime -- is it Mr Okoh?</p> <p>13 A. Okoh, yes.</p> <p>14 Q. Thank you.</p> <p>15 As to timings, is it right that you were mobilised</p> <p>16 at 01.33, on the road at 01.36, and at the scene at</p> <p>17 01.47? Does that sound about right?</p> <p>18 A. Sounds about right, yes.</p> <p>19 Q. The first topic I'd like to deal with is the view of the</p> <p>20 tower on your arrival.</p> <p>21 Was it apparent that people were trapped in the</p> <p>22 higher floors?</p> <p>23 A. As in when I got off the truck and when I was actually</p> <p>24 there?</p> <p>25 Q. When you arrived at the tower.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 137</p>	<p>1 A. Well, I don't think he was in charge; I think I just</p> <p>2 remember seeing him and him giving us our first</p> <p>3 instruction.</p> <p>4 Q. Was there a sense when you attended the holding area of</p> <p>5 priority being given to particular tasks?</p> <p>6 A. I think there was lots of people everywhere being given</p> <p>7 lots of different tasks. The first thing we were told</p> <p>8 was to go and get as much equipment as we could carry,</p> <p>9 which we went and did. When we come back, there was --</p> <p>10 the aerial ladder needed to be moved and there was hose</p> <p>11 in the way. That needed to be moved, so we helped with</p> <p>12 moving that out the way. There were lots of different</p> <p>13 tasks and lots of different places.</p> <p>14 Q. Did you have any sense when you arrived at the holding</p> <p>15 area that the early identification of EDBA crews was</p> <p>16 a priority so that they could be assigned to the BA main</p> <p>17 control centre?</p> <p>18 A. Yes, I think obviously from when we first got there, the</p> <p>19 first task was to go and get equipment. So, yes, we</p> <p>20 knew we would be needed as EDBA, but that wasn't the</p> <p>21 first thing we were instructed to do.</p> <p>22 Q. A slightly different point, but in terms of paramedics,</p> <p>23 do you remember whether they'd established a casualty</p> <p>24 clearing area outside the tower at this stage?</p> <p>25 A. The first interaction I had with paramedics was when</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 139</p>
<p>1 A. Yes, I think took a moment -- there was a bit of</p> <p>2 a holding area, took a moment to look up at the building</p> <p>3 and I remember seeing sort of lights from the upper</p> <p>4 floors being shone from the windows, so it looked like</p> <p>5 people's mobile phone maybe being shone from the higher</p> <p>6 floors.</p> <p>7 Q. Given the nature and extent of the fire, did you expect</p> <p>8 to be deployed as part of an EDBA crew during the course</p> <p>9 of the evening?</p> <p>10 A. Yes, I would've expected that.</p> <p>11 Q. You referred to the holding area; did anyone tell you to</p> <p>12 go there once you arrived at the scene?</p> <p>13 A. No. I think we took our sets straight off the track</p> <p>14 because obviously we knew we'd need them and went to go</p> <p>15 and see what we'd need to do, and there was a tree on</p> <p>16 the corner and we just sort of collated there. I think</p> <p>17 people were being given instructions from there. So we</p> <p>18 collated there for a minute, got an instruction to go</p> <p>19 and do something and then went back to there.</p> <p>20 Q. So effectively people went there to be assigned tasks;</p> <p>21 is that right?</p> <p>22 A. Yes. I don't know if it was an official place, it was</p> <p>23 just where we happened to congregate to start with.</p> <p>24 Q. It was the Hammersmith watch manager, Paul Watson, who</p> <p>25 was in charge, was it?</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 138</p>	<p>1 we'd come back from going to get equipment, come back to</p> <p>2 the tree area. There were two paramedics -- no, sorry,</p> <p>3 Crew Manager Stern, Jamal Stern, had come out of the</p> <p>4 building and had found two paramedics and said they were</p> <p>5 needed inside the building. They'd understandably said</p> <p>6 they couldn't go near the building because of debris</p> <p>7 falling everywhere, so we were to bring the casualty out</p> <p>8 to them, which we did, and then I think they retreated</p> <p>9 back to -- I don't know whether it was an official</p> <p>10 casualty handling area, but it was a bit further away.</p> <p>11 Q. Were you aware of any senior LAS staff on duty at that</p> <p>12 stage? Did you see anyone?</p> <p>13 A. Not to my knowledge. These two paramedics, but</p> <p>14 I couldn't have told you their rank or anything.</p> <p>15 Q. You mentioned you were commissioned by the Hammersmith</p> <p>16 watch manager to collect hose and other forms of</p> <p>17 equipment.</p> <p>18 Do you think that was the most urgent task for an</p> <p>19 FRU team that had EDBA given the state of the fire at</p> <p>20 that stage?</p> <p>21 A. Possibly not, but I think it was a case of we need</p> <p>22 everything -- maybe he didn't see the sets on our back</p> <p>23 as EDBA, but we needed a lot of equipment, we were</p> <p>24 clearly needing all hands on deck, so I think -- yeah.</p> <p>25 Q. My blunt question is: given you were the EDBA crew, did</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 140</p>

<p>1 you push yourselves forward to Mr Watson so that he knew</p> <p>2 an EDBA crew was there and could be deployed?</p> <p>3 A. Not initially, no, we went to do the tasks we were</p> <p>4 briefed to do, but once we'd come back, we sort of --</p> <p>5 maybe it was then actually that we looked up at the</p> <p>6 tower and saw that things were escalating quite</p> <p>7 dramatically and said to each other, "We need to get</p> <p>8 involved, we need to get stuck in, let's go in."</p> <p>9 Q. That was a conversation you had with Mr Reddington; is</p> <p>10 that right?</p> <p>11 A. Yes.</p> <p>12 Q. How long did it take you to collect the hose and other</p> <p>13 forms of firefighting equipment?</p> <p>14 A. I think the first few trucks that we passed were all</p> <p>15 stripped of gear, as you'd expect, so I think we</p> <p>16 probably had to go about five or six trucks deep. So</p> <p>17 that maybe would've taken -- I don't know -- we were</p> <p>18 hurrying, so about 5 minutes, maybe.</p> <p>19 Q. The next topic I'd like to discuss with you is your</p> <p>20 entry into the tower, and page 5 of your witness</p> <p>21 statement in the first substantive paragraph. You</p> <p>22 mention there the conversation you intimated to earlier</p> <p>23 with Mr Reddington. You say in the second line</p> <p>24 Mr Reddington said:</p> <p>25 "... that we needed to be more proactive and get our</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 141</p>	<p>1 disconnected from the FRU at 01.50, switched on at 02.28</p> <p>2 and then there was tally out at the bridgehead at 02.44.</p> <p>3 At first blush, that seems to be 54 minutes or so</p> <p>4 between disconnect and tally out at the bridgehead.</p> <p>5 A. Mm, longer than I thought then.</p> <p>6 Q. Given that, there's a greater lapse of time than you</p> <p>7 recall; is that fair?</p> <p>8 A. I still don't think a lot of that time would've been</p> <p>9 outside. I think once we got into the tower and made</p> <p>10 our way up through, I don't -- I can't really allocate</p> <p>11 where that time was, really. Maybe it was longer to get</p> <p>12 the equipment than I thought, but it didn't seem that</p> <p>13 long.</p> <p>14 Q. Were you aware of what your fellow Chelsea FRU crew</p> <p>15 members were doing at that stage?</p> <p>16 A. Yes, so initially, I think Alan Sime went up on the</p> <p>17 aerial, I think, and me and Tom were together and Crew</p> <p>18 Manager Codd and Firefighter Okoh were together, and</p> <p>19 I believe we all went into the tower together, us four,</p> <p>20 and then I think broke up into two separate BA teams.</p> <p>21 Q. Did you then lose track of where they were?</p> <p>22 A. I lost track of the other two, yeah, yeah.</p> <p>23 Q. Now I'd like to talk about the BA entry and deployment</p> <p>24 and your trip from the lobby to the bridgehead itself.</p> <p>25 This is dealt with at page 5 in the first substantive</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 143</p>
<p>1 sets on and go in as we had Extended Duration Breathing</p> <p>2 Apparatus (EDBA) ..."</p> <p>3 Is it right to say that you were never actually</p> <p>4 ordered to enter the tower at that stage?</p> <p>5 A. Yeah, that's correct, sort of we took it upon ourselves.</p> <p>6 Knowing we've got EDBA, we knew we'd be needed and to</p> <p>7 get in there.</p> <p>8 Q. Were you aware of the BA main control area outside the</p> <p>9 tower run by Watch Manager Kipling?</p> <p>10 A. No.</p> <p>11 Q. Is it fair to say that no officer sought to prioritise</p> <p>12 your EDBA role before you took it upon yourselves to go</p> <p>13 in the tower?</p> <p>14 A. Not outside of the tower, no. Inside we were sort of</p> <p>15 pushed forward, I would say, but not outside that</p> <p>16 I recall.</p> <p>17 Q. Do you think you could or should have sought to be</p> <p>18 deployed sooner than you were as an EDBA crew, given the</p> <p>19 state of the fire?</p> <p>20 A. I don't think there was that much time really between</p> <p>21 our arrival and getting into the tower. Like I say,</p> <p>22 went to go and grab some equipment, come back and it was</p> <p>23 like, right, okay, let's get in there.</p> <p>24 Q. Looking at the timings themselves, the LFB records in</p> <p>25 respect of BA wear suggest that the EDBA was</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 142</p>	<p>1 paragraph of your witness statement, but we don't</p> <p>2 necessarily need to go to it.</p> <p>3 Now, when you dealt with the watch manager in the</p> <p>4 lobby, do you recall one of the watch managers writing</p> <p>5 FSG details on the walls?</p> <p>6 A. In the lobby where, sorry? As in not -- before the</p> <p>7 bridgehead?</p> <p>8 Q. Yes.</p> <p>9 A. I don't recall that.</p> <p>10 Q. Could I ask Paul to draw up MET00005774.</p> <p>11 Do you remember seeing that?</p> <p>12 A. On the ground floor?</p> <p>13 Q. Of the lobby.</p> <p>14 A. No.</p> <p>15 Q. So you didn't absorb any of the content?</p> <p>16 A. No.</p> <p>17 Q. Did the watch manager in the lobby give you or your team</p> <p>18 any instructions regarding FSGs?</p> <p>19 A. No, I actually don't even remember encountering people</p> <p>20 in the lobby. It's all very hazy, that bit, to me. No,</p> <p>21 not that I recall.</p> <p>22 Q. Moving forward to the bridgehead itself, who briefed you</p> <p>23 on your task?</p> <p>24 A. Watch Managers O'Keeffe and De Silvo.</p> <p>25 Q. What precisely did Watch Manager O'Keeffe tell you to</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 144</p>

<p>1 do?</p> <p>2 A. We were briefed with going to the 21st floor. There's</p> <p>3 a bit of confusion here because in my head I have that</p> <p>4 it was 21st floor and it was flats 183 and 184, and I've</p> <p>5 since been made aware that my contemporaneous notes say</p> <p>6 something different.</p> <p>7 Q. I was going to come on to that. It may be easier if we</p> <p>8 turn to your contemporaneous note, which is at</p> <p>9 MET00005625_0001.</p> <p>10 We see just roughly below halfway down the page you</p> <p>11 say:</p> <p>12 "We were then tasked to go under air & commit to the</p> <p>13 21st floor to FSG calls @ 182 & 183."</p> <p>14 A. Yes.</p> <p>15 Q. Which do you think is correct now?</p> <p>16 A. Well, that makes me doubt myself now. In my head since</p> <p>17 the incident I believe I've got 183 and 184, but I don't</p> <p>18 know whether that's because it rhymes with the 21st</p> <p>19 floor, I'm not really too sure. I thought it was 183</p> <p>20 and 184, but like I say, that's making me doubt myself</p> <p>21 now. I can't definitively remember the words -- it</p> <p>22 would've been Watch Manager O'Keeffe and I remember the</p> <p>23 21st floor, but I can't exactly remember which flats</p> <p>24 now. One of those two options.</p> <p>25 Q. Were you given any more detail, for example conditions</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 145</p>	<p>1 with more air.</p> <p>2 Q. But you weren't told explicitly?</p> <p>3 A. No.</p> <p>4 Q. If I can now talk about your deployment to the 21st</p> <p>5 floor and making your way up the tower.</p> <p>6 It's right, isn't it, that you discovered a casualty</p> <p>7 at about the 18th-floor level?</p> <p>8 A. What I believe to be the 18th floor. There was no way</p> <p>9 of telling the floors, and twice myself and Tom had to</p> <p>10 enter the lobby areas at various floors just to remotely</p> <p>11 figure out what floor we were on, which we found</p> <p>12 extremely frustrating at the time. So it was what</p> <p>13 I guesstimate to be the 18th, because I knew I went into</p> <p>14 the lobby area and found flat 164, 16-something, and it</p> <p>15 was a couple of floors up from that, so I was guessing</p> <p>16 it was the 18th.</p> <p>17 Q. It was a female casualty you found?</p> <p>18 A. It was.</p> <p>19 Q. She was unresponsive; is that right?</p> <p>20 A. She was unresponsive. She was lying face-up on her back</p> <p>21 down the stairs.</p> <p>22 Q. Apologies for interrupting.</p> <p>23 A. No, that's okay.</p> <p>24 Q. Are you able to provide a description of the female</p> <p>25 casualty you found?</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 147</p>
<p>1 on the stairwell going up to the 21st floor?</p> <p>2 A. Don't recall, no.</p> <p>3 Q. Do you remember being given any idea of the layout of</p> <p>4 the 21st floor?</p> <p>5 A. Yes. I don't know who did it, but at one point we were</p> <p>6 taken to a wall on the left-hand side of the lifts where</p> <p>7 somebody showed us a map. I can't really even remember</p> <p>8 what was on the wall. But somebody did try to say: this</p> <p>9 is the layout and this is where you're going and --</p> <p>10 Q. Did you make any note of where flats 182, 183, 184,</p> <p>11 whatever it was, were?</p> <p>12 A. No, not to my -- I think it was more, like, where the</p> <p>13 stairwells were, where the doors were of the stairwells</p> <p>14 and --</p> <p>15 Q. Were you given any details as to occupants of those</p> <p>16 particular flats, how many there were, any</p> <p>17 vulnerabilities, any children?</p> <p>18 A. No, not to my knowledge. I don't remember.</p> <p>19 Q. Were you given any idea of conditions within the flats</p> <p>20 themselves?</p> <p>21 A. No.</p> <p>22 Q. Were you aware that you had been specifically deployed</p> <p>23 to the 21st floor because you were EDDB wearers?</p> <p>24 A. I had guessed, yeah, that's why we'd been sent up so</p> <p>25 high, because we had more capacity to get up that high</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 146</p>	<p>1 A. She ...</p> <p>2 Q. Would you like a break?</p> <p>3 A. That's okay. That's okay. It was only by getting up</p> <p>4 really sort of close and basically, you know, touching</p> <p>5 her with my hands that I could figure out exactly</p> <p>6 what -- that she was a woman, to start with. She had</p> <p>7 a black top on and jeans. Again, that's me being really</p> <p>8 close with my torch. And I would've guessed similarish</p> <p>9 age to me.</p> <p>10 Q. I think in your statement you refer to maybe mid-30s?</p> <p>11 A. Yeah -- sorry, yeah, nobody knows how old I am --</p> <p>12 mid-30s, something like that. Yeah, Asian-looking, but</p> <p>13 she might have just been smoke-blackened. I don't</p> <p>14 really know.</p> <p>15 Q. Were you able to assess height or anything like that?</p> <p>16 A. Oh, no. Average.</p> <p>17 Q. If you can't --</p> <p>18 A. Average height. I don't really recall.</p> <p>19 Q. Whilst you were attempting to move the female casualty,</p> <p>20 you found a child; is that right?</p> <p>21 A. Yeah. So the female casualty was lying down the stairs,</p> <p>22 and I tried to move her and she wouldn't move. And I --</p> <p>23 with a bit of investigation with my hands and my torch,</p> <p>24 it became clear that she wasn't moving because her leg</p> <p>25 was trapped. So I don't know quite how she'd fallen</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 148</p>

<p>1 like it, but her left leg had gone down between the 2 bannisters and her foot was tucked up under the ledge of 3 the next platform. I was tugging and tugging and 4 tugging. I told Tom the situation we had and he was 5 tugging. We couldn't move her. So I moved further up 6 the stairs to try and free her and that's when, yeah, 7 I came across the child who I believe was on the 8 platform of that level.</p> <p>9 Q. Are you trained to carry out checks for signs of life in 10 respect of unresponsive casualties?</p> <p>11 A. Yes. Yes.</p> <p>12 Q. Did you platform any checks on the female casualty?</p> <p>13 A. No. Aside from me patting her all over and -- and, 14 yeah, I've got gloves on, so I wouldn't have been able 15 to check for a pulse or anything like that, but if 16 somebody's patting you all over, if you're alert, you're 17 going to say something or respond, so she was 18 unresponsive. I couldn't tell whether she was alive or 19 not.</p> <p>20 Q. Were you able to carry out any checks on the child to 21 see whether the child was responsive?</p> <p>22 A. No. Again, like I say, the child was -- I dragged her, 23 so if she was alert, she would have, you know, come 24 round. But I didn't take a pulse or anything like that.</p> <p>25 Q. Do you have any first-aid kit with you when you are</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 149</p>	<p>1 A. I can't remember definitively who I briefed. I mean, 2 Watch Manager O'Keeffe -- the same people would've been 3 at the bridgehead. I remember seeing a crew manager 4 from Tooting. But we would've passed on that 5 information. I also saw a crew on our way down from the 6 18th floor while we were carrying the child and said to 7 them that we've left a woman behind, we didn't get to 8 the 21st floor.</p> <p>9 Q. Did you tell the officers at the bridgehead that you 10 hadn't got to the 21st floor?</p> <p>11 A. Yes, yes.</p> <p>12 Q. Were you aware of any actions taken thereafter to get up 13 to the 21st floor?</p> <p>14 A. I don't know. No.</p> <p>15 Q. You had a second EDBA task later on in the evening; is 16 that right?</p> <p>17 A. Yes.</p> <p>18 Q. We don't need to turn to it, it's set out at page 10 of 19 your witness statement. It was an EDBA mission, namely 20 search and rescue, on the 9th floor; is that right?</p> <p>21 A. Yes.</p> <p>22 Q. Who deployed you on that mission?</p> <p>23 A. I believe it was ... Pat Goldberg?</p> <p>24 Q. Pat Goulbourne?</p> <p>25 A. Goulbourne, yeah.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 151</p>
<p>1 deployed or not?</p> <p>2 A. No.</p> <p>3 Q. Were you aware of any other casualties in the area 4 around the 18th floor on the stairwell whilst you were 5 dealing with the female casualty and the child?</p> <p>6 A. No. Not on the chairs. I didn't go up further than 7 finding the child on that platform. I sort of dragged 8 her from the platform. There was nobody in the 9 immediate area.</p> <p>10 Q. You took the child down the stairwell and left the 11 female casualty there.</p> <p>12 A. Yes. We decided between us that the female casualty 13 couldn't be moved. She was trapped to such a degree 14 that we figured out later we'd either have to stand her 15 up completely or break her leg somehow to get her out, 16 and I didn't know the state of either casualty, whether 17 they were alive or passed away, but I knew any more time 18 spent on the woman who we were really struggling to free 19 and couldn't free, any more time spent on that would 20 jeopardise the child more. So we made the decision to 21 take the child out who we could carry and -- yeah.</p> <p>22 Q. And you brought the child down to the bridgehead.</p> <p>23 A. Yes.</p> <p>24 Q. Who did you brief once you got back down to the 25 bridgehead?</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 150</p>	<p>1 Q. Can you remember the precise words of his instructions 2 or the gist of the words he used in his instructions to 3 you?</p> <p>4 A. I think it was just, "9th floor, search and rescue, do 5 your best to clear the flats as best you can."</p> <p>6 Q. Can you help us at what time you were deployed on that?</p> <p>7 A. What time?</p> <p>8 Q. You were deployed on that second EDBA mission?</p> <p>9 A. I'd have to look at the telemetry data.</p> <p>10 Q. Were you given any information when you were deployed as 11 to any change in the strategy, search and rescue as 12 opposed to targeted FSG responses?</p> <p>13 A. Sorry, can you repeat the question?</p> <p>14 Q. When you were briefed by Mr Goulbourne, were you given 15 any further information as to whether there had been 16 a change in strategy, ie it's search and rescue rather 17 than a direct response to a particular FSG?</p> <p>18 A. No, other than, you know, the actual brief was search 19 and rescue and no flat numbers were given, no.</p> <p>20 Q. Based on your experience, and having got as high up the 21 tower as you did on the night, just with one other BA 22 partner, what were your views on the ability to evacuate 23 the tower when you were there, so 02.30 in the morning, 24 thereabouts?</p> <p>25 A. As in?</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 152</p>

<p>1 Q. What were your views on the feasibility --</p> <p>2 A. So if we had got to the 21st floor?</p> <p>3 Q. One, could you have got to the 21st floor, do you think?</p> <p>4 A. Yeah, obviously two BA wearers being tasked with two</p> <p>5 flats, I mean, best case scenario there's one person in</p> <p>6 each flat, which is quite unlikely.</p> <p>7 Yeah, I don't know if we really had a plan of</p> <p>8 action, I think we were just going to get up there, see</p> <p>9 the situation, see what we were dealing with. In</p> <p>10 hindsight, I think the best we could've come up with --</p> <p>11 because we didn't have a set or anything like that,</p> <p>12 maybe just -- the stairwell was really smoke-logged,</p> <p>13 they wouldn't have been able to breathe for long. Best</p> <p>14 I was thinking was get them out into the stairwell, get</p> <p>15 them as far as they could and then assist them the rest</p> <p>16 of the way in terms of carrying them or -- as best we</p> <p>17 could, really. It wasn't feasible. It wasn't really</p> <p>18 feasible, but it was best of a bad situation.</p> <p>19 Q. I suspect I know the answer to this, but would it have</p> <p>20 been practicable for you to take up a second BA set in</p> <p>21 addition to carrying your own EDBA set?</p> <p>22 A. It would've been possible. It's not sort of standard.</p> <p>23 And with every firefighter there having their own BA</p> <p>24 set, not many firefighters are going to want to give up</p> <p>25 a BA set. There's not a stack of spare BA sets hanging</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 153</p>	<p>1 people were doing on their exit from the building was</p> <p>2 grabbing bags or whatever they could and holding them</p> <p>3 over their faces, and things were discarded all over the</p> <p>4 place. So on many occasions I came across bundles of</p> <p>5 things which I had to check and make sure they weren't</p> <p>6 people.</p> <p>7 So there was quite a lot -- and hoses and other bits</p> <p>8 of kit. There was quite a lot on the way up, at least</p> <p>9 on the earlier floors.</p> <p>10 Q. Would it have helped evacuation if firefighters had been</p> <p>11 stationed on the stair point to help residents being</p> <p>12 evacuated down and assisting their transit down the</p> <p>13 tower?</p> <p>14 A. Yes, in theory, if they had the equipment and means to</p> <p>15 be able to do that. But if they're just breathing in</p> <p>16 smoky air, they're still not going to --</p> <p>17 Q. What equipment would they have needed if that were to be</p> <p>18 practicable?</p> <p>19 A. I've heard mention of, you know, and seen evidence of</p> <p>20 these individual face masks that I've seen since that</p> <p>21 would've been very, very helpful. To get anyone through</p> <p>22 a smoky environment, even if it's two floors or one</p> <p>23 floor, they're going to come into harm, so when you're</p> <p>24 talking about from the 21st floor, they would've needed</p> <p>25 some sort of aid to get them down there. So those bits</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 155</p>
<p>1 around. You would've had to have taken one off</p> <p>2 a firefighter. So that wasn't really -- yeah, that</p> <p>3 wasn't too feasible.</p> <p>4 Q. Were larger crews than just two required for EDBA work,</p> <p>5 do you think?</p> <p>6 A. You can go in more. Again, it depends sort of how many</p> <p>7 people you're going up to help, what conditions there</p> <p>8 are. Yeah, I think it's easier working in a crew of two</p> <p>9 because you've got to -- you've only got to keep tabs on</p> <p>10 each other. If there's a crew of four, you've got to</p> <p>11 make sure you know where everyone is, what everyone's</p> <p>12 doing, make sure you're all okay. So it's harder to</p> <p>13 negotiate a crew of four as opposed to a crew of two,</p> <p>14 but it's not undoable.</p> <p>15 Q. Do you have any views on the feasibility of evacuating</p> <p>16 the residents who remained in the tower at 02.30 in the</p> <p>17 morning? Would that have been feasible in your view</p> <p>18 given the conditions you encountered on the stairwell?</p> <p>19 A. As in a mass evacuation? Not without assistance, no,</p> <p>20 the stairwells were unmanageable.</p> <p>21 Q. You say they were unmanageable. First of all, were</p> <p>22 there any obstructions on the stairwell you encountered</p> <p>23 going up?</p> <p>24 A. Yeah, so firstly, visibility past the 4th floor was</p> <p>25 nonexistent. And then, yeah, I think what a lot of</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 154</p>	<p>1 of -- where you've got the face mask and the individual</p> <p>2 breathing supply, they would've been, yeah, superb.</p> <p>3 Q. Given your experience in the tower at 02.30 in the</p> <p>4 morning, would it have been practicable to have executed</p> <p>5 a floor-by-floor evacuation?</p> <p>6 A. I mean, I feel like that's a question for the officers</p> <p>7 really.</p> <p>8 Q. Fair enough.</p> <p>9 A. It's not my call, that one.</p> <p>10 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: What you can tell us, and I think</p> <p>11 you have already, is what were conditions like which you</p> <p>12 would have to get people through?</p> <p>13 A. What were they like?</p> <p>14 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Yes.</p> <p>15 A. From the 4th floor upwards, we would've been unable to</p> <p>16 get people out of there. It was really, really heavily</p> <p>17 smoke-logged from the 4th floor upwards. Nobody</p> <p>18 would've been able to breathe.</p> <p>19 Q. Just one final question, and that is radio comms.</p> <p>20 What was your experience of the operation of radio</p> <p>21 comms on the night within the tower?</p> <p>22 A. I believe radio silence. I don't recall receiving any</p> <p>23 comms whatsoever.</p> <p>24 Q. Did you try and radio back to the bridgehead, say when</p> <p>25 you discovered the casualties at around the 18th floor?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 156</p>

<p>1 A. I think I tried earlier on when we were lower down the 2 building and received nothing back. I think because 3 then we'd had silence the whole way up, I don't think 4 I tried on the 18th floor because I just presumed that 5 it was not possible. 6 MR KINNIER: Thank you. 7 Sir, those are all the questions I have for now. 8 Might I ask for a very brief break to see if there are 9 any supplementals? 10 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Of course. 11 It may be that after further consideration, 12 Mr Kinnier will have some more questions he'd like to 13 put to you, so we'll have a 5-minute break now and then 14 I have to ask you to come back and we'll see where we 15 are. 16 Please don't talk to anyone about your evidence 17 while you're out of the room. 18 If you would like to go with the usher, we'll resume 19 at 3.30. 20 Would that be all right, Mr Kinnier? 21 MR KINNIER: I think so, sir. 22 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: All right. Thank you very much. 23 (The witness withdrew) 24 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: All right. 3.30, then, please. 25 (3.23 pm)</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 157</p>	<p>1 Questions by MR KINNIER 2 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Thank you very much, Mr McAlonen. 3 Sit down and make yourself comfortable. 4 THE WITNESS: Thank you. 5 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Yes, Mr Kinnier. 6 MR KINNIER: First of all, good afternoon. Would you please 7 confirm your name for the record. 8 A. Benjamin McAlonen. 9 Q. Thank you very much for attending the inquiry to give 10 evidence today. It's much appreciated. 11 In front of you, there's a blue file. If you open 12 it, behind the first tab hopefully you'll find your 13 statement dated 6 February of this year. Is that right? 14 A. Yes, that's correct. 15 Q. If you turn over the page, hopefully that's your 16 contemporaneous note. 17 A. Yes. 18 Q. If you turn over the final tab, there is the exhibit to 19 your statement, namely the plan of the tower and its 20 immediate surroundings. Is that right? 21 A. Yes, that's correct. 22 Q. Have you read those documents recently? 23 A. I have, yes. 24 Q. Do you confirm the contents are true? 25 A. Yes, to my knowledge they are, yes.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 159</p>
<p>1 (A short break) 2 (3.30 pm) 3 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Yes, Mr Kinnier. 4 MR KINNIER: Sir, many thanks for the break. I'm pleased to 5 say there are no further questions for Ms Upton. 6 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: I wonder whether we should just 7 invite her in to tell her that and say thank you. 8 MR KINNIER: Yes. 9 (The witness returned) 10 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Yes. Thank you, Ms Upton. 11 Now, Mr Kinnier. 12 MR KINNIER: I am pleased to say there are no further 13 questions today, so that just leaves me to say thank you 14 very much for attending the inquiry today. Your 15 evidence has been very helpful. 16 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: It is good of you to come. I hope 17 it hasn't been too difficult an experience and I am 18 grateful for you telling us about your experiences 19 within the tower. You are free to go. 20 THE WITNESS: Thank you. 21 (The witness was released) 22 MR KINNIER: Sir, with your permission, the sixth witness of 23 the day is Benjamin McAlonen. 24 (Pause) 25 BENJAMIN MCALONEN (affirmed)</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 158</p>	<p>1 Q. You are content for those documents to stand as your 2 evidence to the inquiry? 3 A. Yes, I am, yes. 4 Q. First thing I should say, Mr McAlonen, if at any time 5 you want a break, please say so. If I've asked 6 a question which is unclear, again, please say so and 7 I'll rephrase it. 8 Is it right at the time of the fire you were a crew 9 manager based at Lambeth? 10 A. That's right, yes. 11 Q. And that the call sign of the appliance you were 12 travelling in was Hotel 222? 13 A. That's correct. 14 Q. You have some 15 years' experience as a firefighter; is 15 that right? 16 A. That's right, yes. 17 Q. In terms of timings on the night, the LFB records 18 indicated you were mobilised at 01.37. Does that sound 19 right? 20 A. I believe so. It was shortly before -- is this the 21 appliance booking status 2? 22 Q. Status 1. 23 A. Sorry, status 1 is at the station. 24 Q. Yes. 25 A. So booking mobile is --</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 160</p>

<p>1 Q. You are mobilised, then you're on the road, and then you 2 arrive. 3 A. Yes. 4 Q. The first stage of that, when you're mobilised is 01.37. 5 Does that sound about right? 6 A. I don't think that's correct as such. It may have been 7 a couple of minutes before that we were actually mobile 8 because of the mobilising system. 9 Q. You think you arrive at the scene at 01.45 or 10 thereabouts? 11 A. Yes, sounds about right. 12 Q. It may help you get a more definite time, the LFB 13 records for the BA wear indicate that the SDBA 14 disconnect from the appliance was at 01.50. 15 A. Yes, that sounds about right. 16 Q. How many minutes before you disconnected had you 17 arrived, can you remember? 18 A. I'd say that's pretty accurate. Was it 45 you said? 19 So, yeah, I mean, we arrived and then within a couple 20 of minutes we removed the BA sets from the appliance. 21 So that would tally up with that. 22 Q. First topic I'd like to discuss with you is what you 23 encountered on your arrival at the tower. 24 A. Okay. 25 Q. On arrival, were you aware of any officers who were</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 161</p>	<p>1 A. I believe it was maybe being constructed at the time, so 2 he was continuously writing on it as we made entry 3 through the main entrance. 4 Q. Again, can I ask you to look at the middle column and 5 look at the bottom of that middle column. You'll see 6 there 113, 14th. 7 Do you remember seeing that written on the wall as 8 you were in the lobby? 9 A. I believe I didn't look at it in that much detail, to be 10 fair. 11 Q. Is it fair to say you didn't absorb the detail? 12 A. No. 13 Q. Before you were deployed from the bridgehead, did you 14 see any other firefighters come down the tower from 15 floor 14? 16 A. From the bridgehead or from the lobby? 17 Q. When you were in the bridgehead -- 18 A. Right. 19 Q. -- did you see or meet any firefighters coming down from 20 floor 14? 21 A. Prior to that -- this was in -- because where the 22 mezzanine floor was -- we were formed up on the 23 mezzanine, queuing there, and then we was getting sent 24 from there up to the actual bridgehead, which was on -- 25 I have to check my notes -- I believe it was on the</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 163</p>
<p>1 responsible for allocating tasks to those crews that 2 were arriving at the scene? 3 A. For BA wearers, yes. I believe it was Watch Manager 4 Brown from Battersea who was standing at the base of the 5 tower, and he was calling forward crews, basically, to 6 be ready to be sent up to the bridgehead. 7 Q. Was he particularly searching for EDBA crews? 8 A. I couldn't tell you that. He didn't make it known if he 9 was. 10 Q. Turning to the next topic, which is entry and 11 deployment. 12 A. Mm. 13 Q. Your trip from the lobby to the bridgehead -- 14 A. Yes. 15 Q. -- at the tower. 16 When you were at the lobby, is it right that Watch 17 Manager Glynn Williams was writing FSG details on the 18 walls? 19 A. That's right. That was on the ground floor, just inside 20 the door on the left, I believe. 21 Q. Did he give you a bit of paper to take to the 22 bridgehead? 23 A. No. 24 Q. If I could ask Paul to bring up MET00005774. 25 Do you remember seeing that in the lobby?</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 162</p>	<p>1 3rd floor at the time, and there was Watch Manager 2 Watson from Hammersmith, he was detailing crews from 3 that mezzanine floor, and then saying, "Right, we need 4 another crew of two, another crew" -- whatever, and 5 that's who actually tasked us with our brief, if you 6 like, or our role for where we was going. 7 Whilst we were there, there was casualties coming 8 down. I believe -- I don't believe I saw firefighters 9 come past that point. They would've only come down to 10 just below the bridgehead, I believe. 11 Q. You think that the bridgehead at that stage was on the 12 3rd floor, not the 2nd floor; is that right? 13 A. That's correct, yes. 14 Q. Could I ask Paul to bring up MET00013074. 15 Do you remember seeing those wall markings on the 16 2nd floor? 17 A. If that's in the lift lobby on the 2nd floor, no, 18 because they're separate from the route up. 19 Q. So you didn't look at the detail? 20 A. No. 21 Q. Going back to an earlier answer you gave, who gave you 22 your instructions as to the task you were to discharge? 23 A. Watch Manager Watson, I believe. I didn't know his 24 surname at the time, I just know him as Paul from -- he 25 was the officer in charge of Hammersmith. He tasked us</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 164</p>

<p>1 with -- he gave us a small piece of paper and just said, 2 "There's flat 111, 14th floor." 3 Q. Did he give you any detail beyond that? 4 A. He said a mother and child was in the flat, and 5 basically to go and report to the bridgehead. 6 Q. Did he give you any information regarding conditions in 7 the stairwell, conditions in flat 111? 8 A. No. He did say there's -- it was more -- not just to me 9 personally, but generic to the crews along the 10 bridgehead, there was a small plan that had been drawn 11 of a floor layout on that mezzanine floor, and he just 12 said obviously, you know, "Everyone have a look at that 13 and get an idea of your layout." 14 Q. Was it very much entrance from lobby -- 15 A. Yes, there was no actual details in location of flats, 16 it was just literally just -- and he explained it's 17 basically like an H shape, the floor layout. 18 Q. Could I ask Paul to bring up document MET00015625. 19 Do you remember seeing that writing on the wall of 20 the 3rd floor? It's the bridgehead at the 3rd floor. 21 A. I'm not 100 per cent sure, to be honest. I do remember 22 there being some writing on the wall, but that was what 23 I saw when I came down when I debriefed with the officer 24 in charge of entry control. 25 Q. So were you aware of the content of the detailed</p> <p>Page 165</p>	<p>1 A. He said mother and child. 2 Q. Were you given any idea as to the gender or age of the 3 child? 4 A. No. 5 Q. Are you sure that you were told flat 111 and not any 6 other flat? 7 A. Yes, it was written on a piece of paper. 8 Q. Were you aware of what instructions had been given to 9 Mr Herrera and Ms Orchard in terms of the FSG? 10 A. No. 11 Q. Were you aware of any other crews that had been sent up 12 to the 14th floor in response to FSGs before you went 13 up? 14 A. No, not before I was committed, no. 15 Q. Now, if I can next turn to the question of your 16 deployment and timings. 17 The LFB records indicate that tally out at the 18 bridgehead was at 02.31 and tally in was at 02.45. 19 Does that give us the time frame for your -- 20 A. Yeah, I guess so. I lost all concept of time on the 21 evening, to be honest. 22 Q. The next question I'd like to ask you about is 23 conditions in the lobby of the 14th floor. 24 When you got into the lobby itself, can you describe 25 the conditions you encountered?</p> <p>Page 167</p>
<p>1 information that was on that? 2 A. Sorry, can we zoom in on the 14th floor part? 3 Q. Yes. 4 A. Yes, I do remember seeing that. This was when I came 5 back down from the incident. I was debriefed with Watch 6 Manager De Silvo. 7 Q. So after you'd -- 8 A. This was after I'd been up to the 14th floor, basically. 9 And she actually -- I went through where we'd been. She 10 crossed off 111. I think that's 112. And she wrote the 11 "3 rescues" on the thing, by 113. 12 Q. If I could ask Paul to bring up one final photograph, 13 MET00018749. 14 Do you remember seeing this forward information 15 board at the bridgehead? 16 A. No. It may well have been there at the time. I don't 17 recall seeing it, though. 18 Q. Thank you very much. 19 If I can now go back to the instructions you were 20 given. 21 A. Mm-hm. 22 Q. Were you and Mr Juggins briefed by Mr Watson? 23 A. Yes, we was, yes. 24 Q. Did you understand the reference to a lady and child to 25 be a mother and child or --</p> <p>Page 166</p>	<p>1 A. The conditions were very poor. The smoke level was 2 right down to the floor. The smoke was very thick, very 3 black in colour. Made visibility nigh on zero. It was 4 difficult to see your hand in front of your face. 5 The actual smoke itself, although it's not unusual, 6 it seemed particularly sticky. I kept having to try and 7 clear my face mask, basically, to be able to see my 8 gauge checks and stuff like that. 9 Q. Did you encounter another crew on the 14th floor? 10 A. When we first made entrance to the 14th floor, I believe 11 I heard another crew and saw a torchlight on the actual 12 floor, which is normally -- they're quite distinctive, 13 light from the torch within the smoke. I tried to make 14 contact with that crew but I had no joy, and I thought 15 rather than waste time trying to do that, we carried on 16 with our brief, basically. 17 Q. How far away were you from the other crew? Could you 18 estimate the distance? 19 A. It was difficult to say. I couldn't see across the 20 lobby because the smoke was so thick, so I had -- 21 knowing how -- the distance we're talking about. 22 Q. Flat 111, was the door open, ajar, unlocked? 23 A. The flat to 111 was wide open, which I thought was very 24 unusual. In my mind, if you're someone wishing to be 25 rescued from a flat in a relatively safe place, you</p> <p>Page 168</p>

<p>1 wouldn't be having your front door wide open and letting</p> <p>2 all the contents of the lobby enter the flat. So</p> <p>3 I thought that was a bit odd in my experience, if you</p> <p>4 like.</p> <p>5 Q. Did you go into flat 111?</p> <p>6 A. We started to make entry. Firefighter Juggins had</p> <p>7 a thermal imaging camera with him. He was looking,</p> <p>8 searching around the flat, and I was trying to radio to</p> <p>9 entry control to find out if there's any update, further</p> <p>10 information, if they've already been rescued or</p> <p>11 something like that.</p> <p>12 Q. Were you able to get through?</p> <p>13 A. No.</p> <p>14 Q. Did you knock on the door of flat 112?</p> <p>15 A. We did. Whilst still trying to make contact with entry</p> <p>16 control, I said to Firefighter Juggins we'll carry on</p> <p>17 searching whilst we're here, we might as well check the</p> <p>18 rest of the floor, basically. We knocked on flat 112.</p> <p>19 We kicked the door. It's more audible, obviously, than</p> <p>20 just a knock from a gloved hand. There was no entry, so</p> <p>21 I said -- we had an enforcer with us. We was going to</p> <p>22 force entry to flat 112, which is what we done.</p> <p>23 Q. Was anyone within flat 112?</p> <p>24 A. No.</p> <p>25 Q. Did you then move on to the next flat, 113?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 169</p>	<p>1 do?" So because I wasn't aware of exactly where</p> <p>2 flat 113 was, I just said to him, "Tell them we're</p> <p>3 getting them out, we're taking them down."</p> <p>4 I can't remember if I went to the door as well. But</p> <p>5 that is what we done, basically, we went to the flat to</p> <p>6 go and knock on the door again and say, "You are coming</p> <p>7 out, if not we're going to break the door down and come</p> <p>8 in."</p> <p>9 Q. Did a lady come out?</p> <p>10 A. It all happened very rapid, the next few moments, if you</p> <p>11 like. I remember someone -- hearing coughing,</p> <p>12 basically, a lady's coughing, and I was then obviously</p> <p>13 aware straight away that the people are now exposed to</p> <p>14 all the smoke and conditions on the lobby.</p> <p>15 I felt someone come in front of me. I reached out</p> <p>16 and grabbed -- it was her arm that I grabbed. And then</p> <p>17 straight away I just thought, well, these people are</p> <p>18 now -- they're breathing all this horrible smoke and</p> <p>19 stuff, we've got to get them down straight away.</p> <p>20 Q. How many did you take down?</p> <p>21 A. Initially I had this lady by the arm, and I led her over</p> <p>22 to the stairwell, because I was quite close to the</p> <p>23 actual -- the door. I could literally reach out from</p> <p>24 where I was standing to go and make entry straight onto</p> <p>25 the staircase. So I started proceeding down the stairs</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 171</p>
<p>1 A. We exited flat 112. We was continuing on the left-hand</p> <p>2 wall, and as we came a bit further along the corridor,</p> <p>3 we then came across another crew, which immediately --</p> <p>4 as soon as I started speaking to them, it became</p> <p>5 apparent it was a Firefighter Herrera from my own</p> <p>6 station.</p> <p>7 Q. You recognised his voice?</p> <p>8 A. Yes, I recognised his voice.</p> <p>9 Q. You say that you were told by Mr Herrera, "Ben, there's</p> <p>10 loads of people in 113 and they won't come out, they</p> <p>11 won't open the door, they won't come out."</p> <p>12 A. That's correct, yes.</p> <p>13 Q. Did you ask how many people precisely within flat 113?</p> <p>14 A. I didn't, no. They just said there's loads of people.</p> <p>15 I don't know what he was meaning by that, but "loads of</p> <p>16 people" is just -- to me, it's just everyday talk, if</p> <p>17 that makes sense.</p> <p>18 Q. Could you hear him clearly?</p> <p>19 A. I could, yes.</p> <p>20 Q. It's right that you went into flat 113?</p> <p>21 A. I didn't personally go inside the flat. I was still in</p> <p>22 the lobby at this time.</p> <p>23 Q. Was the door to 113 open whilst you were --</p> <p>24 A. No, it wasn't, no. The door was still shut as far as</p> <p>25 I'm aware, because he said, like, "What are we going to</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 170</p>	<p>1 with her, and the lady tripped and fell. I lost</p> <p>2 a physical hold on her.</p> <p>3 I then continued down the stairs, again expecting to</p> <p>4 find the lady either on the turn of the stairs or in the</p> <p>5 vicinity. I couldn't find her, I searched that turn of</p> <p>6 the stairs. I went down the next flight of stairs,</p> <p>7 searched on that turn as well and I couldn't find her.</p> <p>8 So I just assumed that she'd managed to pick herself up</p> <p>9 and carry on.</p> <p>10 Q. Then you went back up to floor 14; is that right?</p> <p>11 A. Yes.</p> <p>12 Q. And you encountered a man coming down?</p> <p>13 A. Yes. Basically -- I can't remember -- I think it was on</p> <p>14 the last flight of stairs before the 14th floor again,</p> <p>15 someone came past me, and I -- the only reason I know it</p> <p>16 was a man is because I must have said something to him</p> <p>17 like, "Are you all right?" or something like that, and</p> <p>18 he said, "I'm getting out, I'm getting out". I'm</p> <p>19 thinking in my mind, okay, he's making his own way,</p> <p>20 that's great, I can probably -- or me and Firefighter</p> <p>21 Juggins can probably manage two people on the way out if</p> <p>22 we come across them on the way down.</p> <p>23 So I went back onto the landing to find out where --</p> <p>24 like Firefighter Juggins and also find out if there's</p> <p>25 any more people to come down.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 172</p>

<p>1 Q. Did you see whether the man was carrying a child on his 2 back?</p> <p>3 A. Not at that point, no. I wasn't aware of that.</p> <p>4 Later on, it --</p> <p>5 Q. When you say later on, when did you become aware of 6 that?</p> <p>7 A. Basically when I -- I got another guy out as well.</p> <p>8 Q. This is the second man?</p> <p>9 A. This is the -- yes, the second man. The second man.</p> <p>10 Escorted him down to the stairs, went past the 11 bridgehead down to 2nd floor level, I believe it 12 would've been, to hand over. There was some senior 13 officers there that were taking the casualties off of 14 us, and I saw the -- it's only an assumption at the 15 time -- a guy in front of me -- he was in the corner of 16 the stairwell and he had a child on his back. They were 17 lifting the child off of his back. And then that's when 18 I was aware that there was a child with him as well.</p> <p>19 Q. So by the time you got down there, were you aware that 20 the woman, the child and the two gentlemen had come from 21 flat 113?</p> <p>22 A. I was still unsure of the whereabouts of the woman at 23 that time.</p> <p>24 Q. You returned to the bridgehead.</p> <p>25 A. Yes.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 173</p>	<p>1 entry into the flat itself so I couldn't confirm that.</p> <p>2 Q. When the other crew came down from flat 113, did you ask 3 them whether they'd searched flat 113 before coming 4 down?</p> <p>5 A. Eventually.</p> <p>6 Q. When?</p> <p>7 A. This was later on, outside.</p> <p>8 Q. Outside when you were resting on the grassy area by the 9 leisure centre; is that right?</p> <p>10 A. To be honest, no. Afterwards -- we exited the building. 11 Eventually we had to force our way out the side of it 12 through a window. I don't know whether you're going to 13 come on to this shortly, I'm not sure, but we actually 14 came across -- this was sometime after as well because 15 there was quite an amount of debris falling, if you 16 like, from the building, so actually -- there was 17 a covered walkway, and we was taking shelter under there 18 whilst we were waiting for a safe moment to get away 19 from the tower, and this was going towards Latimer Road 20 entrance, I believe it was.</p> <p>21 Whilst I was standing there waiting, Firefighter 22 Herrera came out of the tower as well, and then we 23 basically said, like, we've got to get back to -- like, 24 try and find our way back to our truck to service our 25 sets and stuff.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 175</p>
<p>1 Q. What did you debrief at the bridgehead?</p> <p>2 A. At the bridgehead I went and saw Watch Manager De Silvo, 3 she was running the entry control board that my tally 4 was in. I told her basically what we'd done. We'd been 5 up to 111, that was clear. As I was going through with 6 her, she was marking it on the board that you saw 7 a picture of.</p> <p>8 I said then as well we brought three people down. 9 At that time we obviously weren't aware of the child. 10 And she said, "Is that clear?" I said, "I can't confirm 11 that. There's another crew behind us, they should be 12 down in a minute and they can confirm it."</p> <p>13 Q. When you said you can't confirm it, did you explain why 14 you couldn't confirm it?</p> <p>15 A. I can't remember, to be honest.</p> <p>16 Q. Okay.</p> <p>17 It may help if you turn to page 12 of your statement 18 and two lines down from the top. You say this: 19 "I confirmed with the entry control board officer 20 that three people had been rescued from flat 113 but 21 I could not confirm that it was empty as we had escorted 22 people out from the landing and not searched the flat."</p> <p>23 A. That's correct.</p> <p>24 Q. Did you tell them you hadn't searched the flat?</p> <p>25 A. As far as I'm aware I did. Like I say, I didn't make</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 174</p>	<p>1 When we eventually managed to get away from the 2 tower, as we came up towards the corner of 3 Latimer Road -- I'm sure it's Latimer Road station, 4 there's like a walkway that goes down the side, and on 5 the corner there was a guy standing on his phone. 6 I recognised the guy's shirt from -- basically, he was 7 the last gentleman that I brought down from the tower. 8 It was a purple-coloured shirt. I remembered it because 9 he was right in front of me walking down the stairs. He 10 was on his phone there.</p> <p>11 I just sort of said to him, like, "Are you all 12 right?" and stuff and he was just on his phone and 13 I carried on walking round. I'm not sure if Pete 14 stopped to talk to him or not.</p> <p>15 Q. Pete is Mr Herrera?</p> <p>16 A. Sorry, yes, Firefighter Herrera.</p> <p>17 Q. Was Mr Herrera there when you recognised this gentleman 18 from flat 113?</p> <p>19 A. Yes, yes.</p> <p>20 Q. How would you describe the gentleman? What did his face 21 look like? How tall was he?</p> <p>22 A. He's not as tall as me. It was difficult to explain, to 23 be honest. Difficult to describe, not explain. I think 24 he was --</p> <p>25 Q. So you spoke to him first, did you?</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 176</p>

<p>1 A. We didn't speak as in like -- I said, "Are you okay?"</p> <p>2 That was literally as far as I said to him.</p> <p>3 Q. What did he say to you?</p> <p>4 A. He was just on his phone, talking on his phone, so he</p> <p>5 didn't really acknowledge myself.</p> <p>6 Q. Was he speaking in English on the phone?</p> <p>7 A. No.</p> <p>8 Q. Did you just walk on?</p> <p>9 A. I carried on round the corner, yes.</p> <p>10 Q. Where was Mr Herrera during this?</p> <p>11 A. He was with me on the side, but he was --</p> <p>12 Q. Side-by-side with you?</p> <p>13 A. Er ... I believe so, yes.</p> <p>14 Q. Did he say anything to this gentleman?</p> <p>15 A. He did, yes.</p> <p>16 Q. Did you stay with Mr Herrera whilst Mr Herrera was</p> <p>17 having this conversation?</p> <p>18 A. No, I carried on walking.</p> <p>19 Q. So you didn't overhear what was said?</p> <p>20 A. No.</p> <p>21 Q. Did you ask Mr Herrera whether he'd searched flat 113</p> <p>22 before he came down?</p> <p>23 A. No.</p> <p>24 Q. Are you aware of policy 803 that governs search and</p> <p>25 rescue?</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 177</p>	<p>1 if you like, to escort them down the stairs. It was</p> <p>2 a bit of a -- er ... I can't think of the right word at</p> <p>3 the minute, but it was a bit of a long shot, if you</p> <p>4 like, to try and bring them out as we did without them,</p> <p>5 you know, collapsing or whatever.</p> <p>6 Q. Going back to the conversation Mr Herrera was having</p> <p>7 with the gentleman on the phone outside.</p> <p>8 A. Yes.</p> <p>9 Q. You walked on.</p> <p>10 A. Mm-hm.</p> <p>11 Q. Did Mr Herrera come up and tell you --</p> <p>12 A. Yeah.</p> <p>13 Q. What did he say to you this gentleman had said to him?</p> <p>14 A. He came running up and said --</p> <p>15 Q. He ran up to you?</p> <p>16 A. He ran up to me and said, "That guy's brother is still</p> <p>17 in there, he's on the phone to him now, he's still on</p> <p>18 the 14th floor."</p> <p>19 Q. That's what Mr Herrera said to you to the best of your</p> <p>20 knowledge?</p> <p>21 A. Yes.</p> <p>22 Q. Did Mr Herrera say that the man had said there was no</p> <p>23 one else in the flat?</p> <p>24 A. No, there wasn't time -- I immediately -- straight away</p> <p>25 I tried to get on my handheld radio to relay that</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 179</p>
<p>1 A. Possibly. I wouldn't be able to know it by number, but</p> <p>2 yes.</p> <p>3 Q. Are you aware of the provision that provides that where</p> <p>4 a casualty has been found, a secondary search ought to</p> <p>5 be carried out of the immediate vicinity? Are you aware</p> <p>6 of that provision within the policy?</p> <p>7 A. Yes.</p> <p>8 Q. Given that they had found four people, or four people</p> <p>9 had been within flat 113, would you have expected</p> <p>10 firefighters to have carried out a secondary search</p> <p>11 before leaving?</p> <p>12 A. Ordinarily, yes, in a normal fire situation.</p> <p>13 Q. Would you expect them to have carried out that secondary</p> <p>14 search even if they'd been told by one of the departing</p> <p>15 residents that everyone was out?</p> <p>16 A. It depends how much you believe the resident, I guess.</p> <p>17 If you're taking their word for it, you're -- by any</p> <p>18 means, this was no way an ordinary incident. I think</p> <p>19 everybody was more than aware of the time restraints</p> <p>20 potentially on ourselves with our breathing apparatus</p> <p>21 capabilities, the actual conditions within the tower</p> <p>22 block and the stairwell.</p> <p>23 I mean, I myself had thoughts of, you know, what on</p> <p>24 Earth are we going to find? We're bringing these people</p> <p>25 down, we've got no, like, protection for the residents,</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 178</p>	<p>1 information to someone, because we was in no position</p> <p>2 to -- where we were physically, there wasn't anyone</p> <p>3 local to the actual -- that could use that information,</p> <p>4 if you like. So I tried to contact Watch Manager Sadler</p> <p>5 I knew who was running the FSG outside. And even the</p> <p>6 bridgehead as well. But it was just impossible. There</p> <p>7 was just too much radio traffic.</p> <p>8 Q. With the information that Mr Herrera brought to you,</p> <p>9 that the gentleman's brother was still within</p> <p>10 flat 113 --</p> <p>11 A. Mm-hm.</p> <p>12 Q. -- what did you do next to relay that information?</p> <p>13 A. Once we'd also -- as we was walking up, I immediately --</p> <p>14 I wanted to get back physically to where Watch Manager</p> <p>15 Sadler was collating that information for the fire</p> <p>16 survival guidance and tell him physically. I knew the</p> <p>17 radios weren't -- they weren't any good. So there</p> <p>18 was -- I was saying to the local residents, "How can we</p> <p>19 get back round to the front of the tower, the other</p> <p>20 side?" And one of the residents who knew the area well,</p> <p>21 he basically directed us back to where we needed to be.</p> <p>22 Q. Do you know what further steps were taken thereafter to</p> <p>23 try and get to the flat?</p> <p>24 A. I don't, I'm afraid, no.</p> <p>25 Q. Later on in the evening, is it right that you were</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 180</p>

<p>1 recuperating with your crew outside the tower, so with</p> <p>2 Mr Herrera, Juggins, Orchard, Evans and Bloxham? Do you</p> <p>3 remember that?</p> <p>4 A. Yes, we were at some point, yes.</p> <p>5 Q. At that stage, did Mr Herrera recall the conversation</p> <p>6 he'd had with the gentleman within flat 113?</p> <p>7 A. No. No, the subject never came up, to be honest.</p> <p>8 Q. Did you become aware on the night of what happened to</p> <p>9 those who had been left behind in flat 113?</p> <p>10 A. Sorry, could you say that again, please?</p> <p>11 Q. Did you become aware on the night itself of what</p> <p>12 happened to those left behind in flat 113?</p> <p>13 A. Not on the night itself, no.</p> <p>14 Q. When did you first become aware of what had happened to</p> <p>15 them?</p> <p>16 A. I believe it was maybe a couple of nights afterwards.</p> <p>17 Q. How did you find out?</p> <p>18 A. I think I was watching the news and that's when I became</p> <p>19 aware of, you know, what happened.</p> <p>20 Q. One final point, distinct to the topics we've been</p> <p>21 discussing, and that's telemetry problems.</p> <p>22 You refer at pages 15 and 16 of your witness</p> <p>23 statement to manual calculations of breathing times that</p> <p>24 you were required to carry out --</p> <p>25 A. Yes.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 181</p>	<p>1 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Well, can you hold yourself in</p> <p>2 readiness to be called back shortly?</p> <p>3 THE WITNESS: Of course.</p> <p>4 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: We'll see how quickly we can do it.</p> <p>5 All right?</p> <p>6 THE WITNESS: Yes.</p> <p>7 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Would you like to go with the usher,</p> <p>8 please.</p> <p>9 (The witness withdrew)</p> <p>10 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Mr Kinnier, I'll say 4.10 or sooner</p> <p>11 if you are ready sooner.</p> <p>12 MR KINNIER: Thank you, sir.</p> <p>13 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Thank you.</p> <p>14 (4.05 pm)</p> <p>15 (A short break)</p> <p>16 (4.10 pm)</p> <p>17 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Yes, Mr Kinnier.</p> <p>18 MR KINNIER: Sir, two brief supplementals, with your</p> <p>19 permission.</p> <p>20 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Right. Shall we ask Mr McAlonen to</p> <p>21 come back in, please.</p> <p>22 (The witness returned)</p> <p>23 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Thank you. I think Mr Kinnier has</p> <p>24 a couple of questions.</p> <p>25 THE WITNESS: Sure.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 183</p>
<p>1 Q. -- because of the difficulties over signal between the</p> <p>2 BA set and the ECB.</p> <p>3 Did this have any impact on the operations during</p> <p>4 the night, in your view?</p> <p>5 A. I don't think it had any sort of direct effect, if you</p> <p>6 like. I think everybody knew the capabilities of the</p> <p>7 equipment and, therefore -- and we'd also been working</p> <p>8 on manual calculations for a number of -- well, for</p> <p>9 a long, long time before that, before the new telemetry</p> <p>10 stuff come in. So we still was aware of, you know, the</p> <p>11 right -- I say the right way -- the manual way of doing</p> <p>12 the calculations.</p> <p>13 MR KINNIER: Mr McAlonen, those are all the questions I have</p> <p>14 for you now. Might I have a brief break to see if there</p> <p>15 are any supplementals?</p> <p>16 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Well, from time to time, it's</p> <p>17 discovered there are questions which ought to be asked</p> <p>18 but haven't been, so I am going to ask you to leave us</p> <p>19 for a few minutes so Mr Kinnier can check the position.</p> <p>20 Please don't talk to anyone about your evidence</p> <p>21 while you're out of the room.</p> <p>22 How long should we allow for this, Mr Kinnier?</p> <p>23 MR KINNIER: Sir, if you are able to return at 4.10, or even</p> <p>24 sooner if there is an absence of questions. It may be</p> <p>25 better if I just ask your usher.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 182</p>	<p>1 MR KINNIER: Thank you for your patience.</p> <p>2 I don't know whether you've been listening to</p> <p>3 Mr Herrera's evidence previously in the afternoon, but</p> <p>4 his account was that Mr Omar Alhajali told him when they</p> <p>5 were still in the flat that there was no one else in the</p> <p>6 flat, flat 113.</p> <p>7 When did you first become aware that that was</p> <p>8 Mr Herrera's recollection of what he had been told by</p> <p>9 Mr Alhajali?</p> <p>10 A. Earlier. I was watching it upstairs.</p> <p>11 Q. Had he told you he went into the lounge of flat 113 at</p> <p>12 any stage?</p> <p>13 A. No.</p> <p>14 MR KINNIER: I've no further questions. That just leaves me</p> <p>15 to thank you for giving evidence today. It's very much</p> <p>16 appreciated.</p> <p>17 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Thank you very much for coming to</p> <p>18 give evidence, it's very valuable, and you are now free</p> <p>19 to go. If you would like to go with the usher. Thank</p> <p>20 you.</p> <p>21 THE WITNESS: Thank you very much.</p> <p>22 (The witness was released)</p> <p>23 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Now, Mr Kinnier.</p> <p>24 MR KINNIER: Sir, we have the seventh and final witness of</p> <p>25 the day coming up. We are just nudging 4.10. I think</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 184</p>

1 with a fair wind, we can complete at 4.30, but with your
 2 indulgence we may stray slightly over that, but I shall
 3 strain every sinew to avoid passing over 4.30.
 4 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: This is Mr Wharnsby, is it?
 5 MR KINNIER: It is.
 6 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: I'm sure, having waited to give his
 7 evidence, he'd like to get it through this afternoon, so
 8 let's do our best.
 9 MR KINNIER: I'm sure he will. Thank you, sir.
 10 May I call Mr Wharnsby.
 11 JON WHARNSBY (affirmed)
 12 Questions by MR KINNIER
 13 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Thank you very much, Mr Wharnsby.
 14 Sit down and make yourself comfortable. I'm sorry
 15 you've waited so long to give your evidence.
 16 THE WITNESS: It's a very important process.
 17 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Yes. I am hoping we can get through
 18 it this afternoon.
 19 MR KINNIER: Good afternoon.
 20 For the record, would you please confirm your name.
 21 **A. Jon Peter Wharnsby.**
 22 Q. In front of you, there's a blue folder. If you open
 23 that, hopefully you'll find your statement dated
 24 15 January of this year. Is that right?
 25 **A. Yes.**

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1 Q. Behind that, your contemporaneous note. Is that right?
 2 **A. That's correct.**
 3 Q. Have you read those documents recently?
 4 **A. I've had a look over them this afternoon.**
 5 Q. Do you confirm the contents are true?
 6 **A. There's some inaccuracies but nothing too --**
 7 Q. Nothing material?
 8 **A. Nothing material, no.**
 9 Q. Are you content for those documents to stand as your
 10 evidence to this inquiry?
 11 **A. I am, yes.**
 12 Q. Now, if you need a break, please shout. If any of my
 13 questions are unclear, shout and I'll try and make them
 14 clearer.
 15 **A. Of course.**
 16 Q. Dealing with basics first, you're a firefighter based at
 17 Shoreditch and were at the time of the fire; is that
 18 right?
 19 **A. That's correct.**
 20 Q. You've had 17 years' experience as a firefighter?
 21 **A. That's correct.**
 22 Q. On the night, you were the driver of an appliance whose
 23 call sign was Foxtrot 241?
 24 **A. Correct.**
 25 Q. And your BA partner on the evening was Firefighter Lowe?

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1 **A. Firefighter Terry Lowe, yes.**
 2 Q. As to timings, the LFB's records indicate you were
 3 mobilised at 02.05, mobile at 02.07, and arrived at the
 4 scene at 02.21. Does that sound about right to you?
 5 **A. That sounds correct, yes.**
 6 Q. Although we'll come back to it in more detail, the
 7 timings of your BA wear, the records provided by the LFB
 8 suggest that you tallied out at the bridgehead at 03.04.
 9 Does that sound about right?
 10 **A. Sorry, the term "tallied out", do you mean --**
 11 Q. People have used "tallied in" confusingly as the
 12 alternative.
 13 **A. I was committed to BA around that time, yes.**
 14 Q. Thank you.
 15 Now, the first topic I'd like to discuss with you is
 16 when you're at the tower, going from the lobby to the
 17 bridgehead.
 18 **A. Yes.**
 19 Q. Do you recall a watch manager writing FSG details on the
 20 wall of the lobby right when you entered the building?
 21 **A. We didn't muster on the lobby, we mustered on the**
 22 **mezzanine floor, and we were waiting to be committed to**
 23 **the bridgehead. All I remember is a rather good drawing**
 24 **being done on the mezzanine level floor by a previous**
 25 **firefighter, which gave the layout where the stairs**

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1 **were, where the flats were off the stairs, which was**
 2 **quite handy. I don't recall the information you're**
 3 **talking about.**
 4 Q. Did a watch manager give you or any member of your team
 5 any FSG instructions on a slip of paper in the lobby?
 6 **A. Not in the lobby, not on the mezzanine floor, it was**
 7 **when we went up -- we waited for a period of time to be**
 8 **committed, and the officers were doing quite a good job**
 9 **of stopping us just -- because obviously --**
 10 Q. Ploughing ahead.
 11 **A. -- everyone was keen to help out, but there obviously**
 12 **needed to be some sort of control of that.**
 13 **We waited there for a few moments. I couldn't tell**
 14 **you how long. The other pair from Shoreditch were**
 15 **behind us and we were just talking about -- we had**
 16 **someone who hadn't done very long, so we had a lot of**
 17 **conversations about: stay calm, take it steady, this is**
 18 **big, but remember your training.**
 19 **So we waited there for a few moments, and then we**
 20 **were called up to the bridgehead, where a female watch**
 21 **manager -- I think in my statement I've demoted her to**
 22 **crew manager but she's actually a watch manager -- she**
 23 **and --**
 24 Q. She handed you an FSG slip of paper?
 25 **A. I can't remember whether it was her or the other officer**

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47 (Pages 185 to 188)

<p>1 that was there, which was a gentleman. I'm afraid we're</p> <p>2 from the east, so west -- I didn't really know many</p> <p>3 people, so the faces and names are sort of lost on me.</p> <p>4 Q. If I can stop you there, the slip of paper in the</p> <p>5 statement, you said it read flat 113, 14th floor; is</p> <p>6 that right?</p> <p>7 A. That's correct, a little post-it note.</p> <p>8 Q. Were you given any further detail to assist completion</p> <p>9 of this FSG task?</p> <p>10 A. Not that I recall, no.</p> <p>11 Q. Nothing like conditions on the stairwell, conditions in</p> <p>12 the particular flat?</p> <p>13 A. We had had crews coming out looking reasonably worse for</p> <p>14 wear and some of them passed information to us regarding</p> <p>15 the conditions off the stairwell, on the stairwell, and</p> <p>16 most notably that there was no marked landing -- the</p> <p>17 numbers were not marked on the landings. So the</p> <p>18 specific information that came from crews was to tell us</p> <p>19 to make sure we count the floors because it was vitally</p> <p>20 important. Other than the information, no.</p> <p>21 Q. So no details of those in the flat, whether adults, men,</p> <p>22 women, children?</p> <p>23 A. Not that I recall, no.</p> <p>24 Q. Were you told that there had been a previous evacuation</p> <p>25 where only some rescues had been made and others had</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 189</p>	<p>1 I remember going onto the stairwell, reasonably clean</p> <p>2 air until possibly the 6th floor, maybe -- almost</p> <p>3 definitely the 6th floor because at that point I was</p> <p>4 counting quite intently. There was lots of hose, a few</p> <p>5 lines of charged hose but some empty hose rolled up, and</p> <p>6 lots of crews coming down.</p> <p>7 Q. How difficult was it to make your way through the</p> <p>8 equipment on the stairwell and with people coming down?</p> <p>9 A. It was impeding. It wasn't difficult to get over too</p> <p>10 much, but it was impeding and slowing us down a little</p> <p>11 bit, and obviously when crews were coming out with</p> <p>12 casualties, the cry "Casualty" comes out, as you've</p> <p>13 heard before, and we crouch down, make sure they go out.</p> <p>14 We took the inside path on the left-hand side.</p> <p>15 I did have a TIC, thermal image camera, and I found</p> <p>16 that was pointless until we got there because we just</p> <p>17 had a handrail to go up.</p> <p>18 Q. You discovered a casualty around about the 10th floor.</p> <p>19 A. I'd be quite confident because I was counting quite</p> <p>20 intently, yes.</p> <p>21 Q. Was it a mother and daughter coming down?</p> <p>22 A. Yes.</p> <p>23 Q. Is it possible that the first casualty was just the</p> <p>24 woman on her own? Just to give you some context,</p> <p>25 Mr Lowe said:</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 191</p>
<p>1 been left in the building?</p> <p>2 A. Answer: no.</p> <p>3 Q. Were you aware of anyone from the Lambeth crew</p> <p>4 indicating to the bridgehead that they had discovered</p> <p>5 people had been left behind in flat 113?</p> <p>6 A. That information wasn't given to me, no.</p> <p>7 Q. When you were at the bridgehead, were you aware of the</p> <p>8 content of any FSGs that related to flat 113?</p> <p>9 A. Sorry, can you clarify?</p> <p>10 Q. When you were at the bridgehead --</p> <p>11 A. Yes.</p> <p>12 Q. -- were you given the details of any other FSGs that</p> <p>13 related to flat 113?</p> <p>14 A. No, I was just given the flat number and the floor to</p> <p>15 proceed to.</p> <p>16 Q. Now, in terms of your deployment to the 14th floor, the</p> <p>17 record indicates you went under air --</p> <p>18 A. Yes.</p> <p>19 Q. -- at 03.04.</p> <p>20 As you went up the tower Mr Lowe suggests that the</p> <p>21 stairwell was chaotic and cluttered with firefighting</p> <p>22 equipment.</p> <p>23 What was your recollection of the condition of the</p> <p>24 stairwells?</p> <p>25 A. Yeah, I'd agree with Firefighter Lowe's account.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 190</p>	<p>1 "Jon helped one person down and we then went back up</p> <p>2 again."</p> <p>3 Can you recall the sequence there?</p> <p>4 A. It's possible they weren't together. I'm not sure --</p> <p>5 I assumed, just from the vicinity between them, that it</p> <p>6 was a mother and a daughter. Obviously that's</p> <p>7 an assumption I made. I just remember there being</p> <p>8 a small person and a big person.</p> <p>9 Q. You took them back down to the bridgehead, did you?</p> <p>10 A. Terry assisted the older person, and what I assumed to</p> <p>11 be the daughter I began to help down the stairs until</p> <p>12 they became -- they started to become unconscious.</p> <p>13 Q. You got them to the bridgehead?</p> <p>14 A. Yes. Yes.</p> <p>15 Q. And --</p> <p>16 A. Sorry, no. We got them -- as I proceeded down the</p> <p>17 stairs, the smoke levels had changed and I began to</p> <p>18 doubt whether I was at the 3rd floor, so I hurried my</p> <p>19 pace and came out on the mezzanine floor, and that's</p> <p>20 where I handed the casualty to someone.</p> <p>21 Q. Did you debrief anyone at the mezzanine or at the</p> <p>22 bridgehead that first of all you discovered casualties</p> <p>23 around about the 10th floor?</p> <p>24 A. No, it was just a cry of "Casualty". Someone took that</p> <p>25 casualty from me who obviously I trust to then care for</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 192</p>

<p>1 that casualty. I went back and Terry -- sorry,</p> <p>2 Firefighter Lowe -- was only just a few paces behind me,</p> <p>3 and he handed over his casualty. We briefly carried on</p> <p>4 with the task that we were given and we were desperate</p> <p>5 to do.</p> <p>6 Q. Did you report back at that stage to the bridgehead that</p> <p>7 you hadn't yet completed the task to flat 113?</p> <p>8 A. Answer: no. There was a lot of radio traffic and</p> <p>9 I can't remember whether Firefighter Lowe had BA comms,</p> <p>10 but I only had a handheld radio.</p> <p>11 There was a lot going on on the radio, and I felt --</p> <p>12 I don't know. I don't know whether this is</p> <p>13 retrospective, but at the time it was just: let's just</p> <p>14 get back up.</p> <p>15 Q. Did you say to anyone at the bridgehead that because you</p> <p>16 had brought down the two casualties, it was imperative</p> <p>17 that further firefighters were deployed up to the</p> <p>18 14th floor to assist you in rescuing people from</p> <p>19 flat 113?</p> <p>20 A. No. At that point, because me and Firefighter Lowe had</p> <p>21 a very brief discussion when we discovered the</p> <p>22 casualties that we should get these people out first, we</p> <p>23 decided that once we'd got them out, we'd just go again</p> <p>24 and we'd carry on with the initial task, which is what</p> <p>25 we did.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 193</p>	<p>1 over your shoulder to bring her down?</p> <p>2 A. That's correct.</p> <p>3 Q. You got down to the bridgehead ahead of Mr Lowe; is that</p> <p>4 right?</p> <p>5 A. My recollection is at this point the bridgehead had been</p> <p>6 moved because of the change of conditions.</p> <p>7 Q. Where was it?</p> <p>8 A. So the bridgehead had been on one of the landings of the</p> <p>9 floor. As we came down the first time, the smoke was</p> <p>10 dropping, dropping floors. So then on the second way</p> <p>11 down, again, I'm not going to report to the bridgehead,</p> <p>12 I'm going to get the casualty out as quickly as</p> <p>13 possible, so I made my way down to the mezzanine floor</p> <p>14 and I was made aware that the bridgehead had been moved</p> <p>15 because of these changing conditions, because obviously</p> <p>16 the people on the bridgehead haven't got BA so they need</p> <p>17 to be in safe air. So this information was relayed back</p> <p>18 to us.</p> <p>19 So I made my way to the mezzanine floor, down the</p> <p>20 glass stairwell, where I was met by -- I don't want to</p> <p>21 demote him either -- Group Manager Goulbourne, who took</p> <p>22 the casualty off me.</p> <p>23 Q. Who did you debrief as to where you'd found the two</p> <p>24 casualties?</p> <p>25 A. Well, once again, it's kind of firefighter sacrilege to</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 195</p>
<p>1 Q. Did the conditions on the stairwell suggest to you and</p> <p>2 Mr Lowe that you needed further personnel to get to the</p> <p>3 14th floor in order to rescue the occupants at flat 113?</p> <p>4 A. No, I feel like we were capable. We had enough air to</p> <p>5 make it -- to complete our original task.</p> <p>6 Q. Even given the conditions you'd encountered on the</p> <p>7 stairwell, both in terms of physical obstruction, smoke</p> <p>8 and people coming down?</p> <p>9 A. I guess some of the decision-making, I don't know</p> <p>10 whether it's subconscious or just experience, but</p> <p>11 I guess we thought if we can't get someone from the</p> <p>12 10th floor down then we probably won't have a chance of</p> <p>13 getting someone from the 14th floor down, so we got the</p> <p>14 people from the 10th floor down first. Going up to the</p> <p>15 14th floor, I just guess I assumed that with the -- that</p> <p>16 you wanted to complete the task in hand quite</p> <p>17 desperately, so get to the flat on the 14th floor and</p> <p>18 then consider the conditions.</p> <p>19 Q. Now, it's right as you went back up the tower you</p> <p>20 encountered a further casualty at about the 8th floor</p> <p>21 level; is that right?</p> <p>22 A. Again, I believe it was two casualties, an older woman</p> <p>23 and a younger child, which again I assumed to be mother</p> <p>24 and daughter.</p> <p>25 Q. Mr Lowe helped the older woman and you threw the girl</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 194</p>	<p>1 leave your BA partner behind, but as we were on the</p> <p>2 stairwell and heading out, I was confident I wouldn't</p> <p>3 lose Firefighter Lowe. So as I had the smaller casualty</p> <p>4 and could move quicker, I left him behind briefly. Once</p> <p>5 I'd handed the casualty over, obviously I now want to</p> <p>6 get back to Firefighter Lowe to make sure him and the</p> <p>7 casualty are okay.</p> <p>8 So with this, I went back up the stairs and I was</p> <p>9 stopped by an officer. I believe it to be Group Manager</p> <p>10 Welch, I'm not sure, who informed me that I should be</p> <p>11 leaving, and I informed him that I should be going in,</p> <p>12 and I went back in, we got Firefighter Lowe, and we</p> <p>13 proceeded back down to where the bridgehead had moved</p> <p>14 now on the ground floor in the atrium.</p> <p>15 Q. Did you debrief anyone at the bridgehead that you hadn't</p> <p>16 been able to complete the --</p> <p>17 A. Absolutely. It's the most important information we had.</p> <p>18 I can't remember who was at the bridgehead, but there</p> <p>19 was a few people. Obviously it had moved at this point</p> <p>20 or was in the process of moving, so it's quite chaotic</p> <p>21 and had taken a lot of information from one place. So</p> <p>22 I made sure at least one or two people had been told we</p> <p>23 didn't make our original task.</p> <p>24 Q. By the time you got back to the bridgehead at that time,</p> <p>25 were you no longer under air, presumably? Can you</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 196</p>

<p>1 remember?</p> <p>2 A. In my statement I said we were low on air. What I kind</p> <p>3 of meant was we were too low on air to complete the task</p> <p>4 on the 14th floor.</p> <p>5 Q. That answers the question I was going to ask you next.</p> <p>6 Can I ask you two final topics.</p> <p>7 First of all hoses. At page 9 of your witness</p> <p>8 statement -- we don't need to go to it unless it would</p> <p>9 help you -- you sorted out hose lines.</p> <p>10 A. Not me personally, it was a team effort.</p> <p>11 Q. But you were part of a team that sorted out hose lines.</p> <p>12 Can you remember at what time you did this? It</p> <p>13 would be after --</p> <p>14 A. So as I say in my statement, after the BA wear, we went</p> <p>15 outside, helped out with some hose and some jets, and</p> <p>16 then were asked to go and retrieve some kit to go back</p> <p>17 into the building. I saw this as an opportunity to get</p> <p>18 back in the building and help out, so myself and</p> <p>19 Firefighter Benaicha went and got this kit, delivered it</p> <p>20 to the officers inside and proceeded up, where I found</p> <p>21 my crew from Whitechapel fire station and my own crew</p> <p>22 and we -- I'm not saying necessarily it was detailed to</p> <p>23 us, but it was very evident that there was only to my</p> <p>24 recollection two lines of hose in the entire building</p> <p>25 and that firefighting was needed to be carried out on</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 197</p>	<p>1 A. When we were extending the hose, we weren't under air,</p> <p>2 so -- which is -- it's outside of our policy if it's</p> <p>3 an irrespirable atmosphere or a chance of being an</p> <p>4 irrespirable atmosphere, we should wear BA.</p> <p>5 Me and the other crews that were with me were quite</p> <p>6 aware that this task, along with the task of search and</p> <p>7 rescue on the other floors, it would've been too much to</p> <p>8 have BA. So we took it upon ourselves to do this</p> <p>9 without BA sets on.</p> <p>10 The conditions were changeable, so when we had crews</p> <p>11 come up, the stairwell would be clear to a point and</p> <p>12 then we'd have crews come up and make entry off of the</p> <p>13 stairwell onto the floors. Every time they done that,</p> <p>14 it filled the stairwell up with smoke completely, to the</p> <p>15 point where we would push BA crews into the door and ask</p> <p>16 them to shut the door behind them, and let it clear.</p> <p>17 There was a few times --</p> <p>18 Q. When the doors were closed, were they effective?</p> <p>19 A. When the doors were closed, they were effective. I sat</p> <p>20 without BA on for a period of time, and the doors were</p> <p>21 radiating heat but were keeping the smoke back.</p> <p>22 MR KINNIER: Sir, those are all the questions I have.</p> <p>23 Rather than asking you to rise, given the time, I shall</p> <p>24 give a quick scan of the hearing room. I don't see any</p> <p>25 bids.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 199</p>
<p>1 the upper floors.</p> <p>2 So for a period of time we were shutting off water,</p> <p>3 extending lines, we brought a dividing breach up, which</p> <p>4 is a piece of equipment which could split one line into</p> <p>5 two and just made sure it went as high as possible.</p> <p>6 Q. To what extent were they obstructing the stairwell?</p> <p>7 A. Just as normal as hose lines would obstruct the</p> <p>8 stairwell. There was a lot of uncharged, rolled-up</p> <p>9 hose.</p> <p>10 Q. Were any charged?</p> <p>11 A. I believe there was two charged, one from the bridgehead</p> <p>12 floor and then one must have been from the floor of</p> <p>13 the -- the 4th floor maybe, of the fire, and that was</p> <p>14 taken up the building. We extended both of these up to</p> <p>15 possibly the 13th floor.</p> <p>16 Q. Okay.</p> <p>17 A. I'm --</p> <p>18 Q. Were hoses still being used to fight fires at this stage</p> <p>19 whilst you were tidying up?</p> <p>20 A. I was -- I don't know, I'm afraid, is the answer to</p> <p>21 that.</p> <p>22 Q. One final question in respect of lobby doors.</p> <p>23 Is it fair to say that when they were closed, the</p> <p>24 lobby doors prevented the spread of smoke into the</p> <p>25 stairwell?</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 198</p>	<p>1 In those circumstances, given the time -- final</p> <p>2 call. There are no further points to be made. So in</p> <p>3 those circumstances --</p> <p>4 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: No one is standing up gesticulating</p> <p>5 or saying anything, so I think it's probably safe to</p> <p>6 infer that they don't have any other questions to</p> <p>7 suggest.</p> <p>8 MR KINNIER: I think so.</p> <p>9 So that just leaves it for me to thank you,</p> <p>10 Mr Wharnsby, for coming to give evidence today. It's</p> <p>11 been very helpful.</p> <p>12 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Likewise, Mr Wharnsby, I'd like to</p> <p>13 thank you for coming along. It's very valuable evidence</p> <p>14 and we're very grateful to you.</p> <p>15 (The witness was released)</p> <p>16 MR KINNIER: Sir, that concludes today's business.</p> <p>17 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Yes.</p> <p>18 MR KINNIER: We have further evidence on Monday.</p> <p>19 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Yes.</p> <p>20 MR KINNIER: I have no application to make, whether on my</p> <p>21 own behalf or on behalf of Mr Millett. I would invite</p> <p>22 you to start at 10 o'clock.</p> <p>23 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Very good.</p> <p>24 Well, thank you very much, you've done well to get</p> <p>25 through such a long list of witnesses in the day and</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 200</p>

1 we'll break there and resume at 10 o'clock on Monday,
 2 then, please.
 3 Thank you very much.
 4 (4.30 pm)
 5 (The hearing adjourned until Monday, 10 September 2018 at
 6 10.00 am)
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