

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: BARTON, NICHOLAS

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

Occupation: FIRE FIGHTER

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

Signature: N BARTON

Date: 05/12/2017

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

On Friday 10 November 2017 I was interviewed on audio disc by DC Amanda WEBSTER and DC Rachel O'CONNOR at HAMMERSMITH Fire Station, also present was union representative Dave YOUNG. The content of this statement is the summary of the interview. I referred to my notes I wrote on 14 June 2017 and exhibit a copy made of the notes as NIB/1

I joined the London Fire Brigade approximately twenty eight years ago. My current role is as a fire fighter on Red Watch with HAMMERSMITH. I have been with HAMMERSMITH for the past 16 years; before that I was with ACTON for 10 years and prior to that I was with HILLINGDON at the start of my career. My call sign is G362. We have mandatory training once or twice a year, we also have drills at the station and lectures, anytime new equipment comes out we get trained on it or if they have changed the way we are meant to do something then we will have training on that. Our training includes high rise building training as realistic as we can possibly make that training. Within our training we are taught about the 'stay put' policy.

I had never been to GRENFELL TOWER. I have previously been to the area in the location of the TOWER as a secondary backup appliance as it is North KENSINGTON's ground.

I started work at 20:00, 13 June 2017, which is the time of roll call. We are told what we will be doing that night should a call come in, what appliance we will be on. I was told that I would be riding at the back, BA (Breathing Apparatus) pump G362 with FF O'HANLON. It was our first night shift of Red

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Watch. I was in bed when we heard the tannoy at approximately 00:55. The initial message comes through on a teleprinter this is like a fax machine; this comes from the watch room which is a main office or hub. The lights all come on, our call sign G362 was called over the tannoy and we were told to mobilise by a computer generated voice. I know to get prepared and go to the appliance (fire truck). The driver normally goes and picks up the message that will have a route map for him and more details about the incident that we're attending. The message informed us that there was a fire in a high-rise building at GRENFELL TOWER. I think the message even said the fourth floor. There is also a mobile data terminal in the appliance which is the driver and the officer in charge responsibility to read and digest the information that comes through on this. When sitting in the rear like I was I cannot see it.

I don't recall the driver's name that night but the crew manager was called DAVIES, he rides in the front with the driver. There were four of us altogether assigned to the appliance. Myself and firefighter O'HANLON were assigned to wear the BA kit; the driver normally does the water once we get to the destination and the crew manager makes sure that we are doing our tasks.

We went up St ANNE's Road and turned right into the Estate. St ANNE's Road bends around as you go up, and GRENFELL TOWER is at the end. We parked on the right hand side almost directly in front of the Tower. As this is NORTH KENSINGTON's ground, normally we are called out as backup and will be third or fourth on the scene. When we parked I got out of the rear of our appliance I noticed that NORTH KENSINGTON's driver (who was already there when we arrived) was setting the hydrant in and he told us that it was a fire on the fourth floor. There were a few people about busying themselves and this is when I thought to myself that this was definitely a fire as they were setting up their equipment; sometimes when we get called to a fire there is no fire. I also noticed that there was some smoke coming out of the building but nothing major. I had not seen any flames at this stage. I did not take too much notice of my surroundings on the ground as my job was to go inside and check out the extent of the fire. Our Crew Manager DAVIES told us to get a couple of BA sets on and the other equipment that we needed such as 45ml hose, the branch — which is the on/off end of the hose — and the thermal imaging camera and make our way inside. Some of the NORTH KENSINGTON crew were already inside. The thermal imaging camera uses heat and light; it will pick up images using these and will record. This stays on the set until it is downloaded. O'HANLON was wearing the thermal imaging camera.

Myself and O'HANLON had the cylinders on our back and the face mask was on a loop around our neck. We then made our way to the bridgehead which was located on the second floor. The bridgehead is

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normally set up two floors below a high rise fire — that is standard procedure. We knew to head for the second floor as we had been told the fire was on the fourth floor. The bridgehead is an acknowledged safe access area to set up for the BA boards and to set up operations for information gathering. As we entered the bridgehead area it was calm with people milling about: as far as all were concerned at that time it was a flat fire and we were there to put it out. As far as I was concerned these flats were concrete boxes and would contain the fire for a certain period of time.

We met some more NORTH KENSINGTON crew and were informed to plug our hose in on the third floor which saves us carrying it up an extra floor and then run it to the fourth floor to where the fire was in flat 16. We were backup to the NORTH KENSINGTON crew. Once we had our briefing from watch manager DOWDEN, he was the incident manager at that time, but later on when the fire got bigger and more pumps were assigned then the rank of the incident manager changes to then a station manager and so on, I don't remember any incident manager other than DOWDEN. We put our face masks on, turned on our equipment, put gloves and flash hoods on and gave our tally to the entry control officer. The tally is a reader that is put into the BA board and informs the Board Operator how much air you have, the time you went in, call sign and name. It allows the Board Operator to keep an eye on all those who have entered past the bridgehead area with BA equipment and how much air time they have left. It is very similar to scuba diving. There is a gauge on the cylinders that the person wearing the BA kit should read and keep an eye on, but the BA board monitor can also contact you if you have gone over your time and have not picked up your tally. There is approximately 20—25 minutes air time and there is a low pressure warning on the gauge that gives you a warning that you have 10 minutes of air left.

Whilst I was getting ready, a fire fighter from NORTH KENSINGTON crew plugged our hose into the third floor and charged it, which means that there is water running through it. There is an outlet on each floor in high rise tower blocks called a dry riser. This is a pipe that runs up the internal of the building; the fire engine plugs in its hose to an inlet on the outside of the building which pumps the water from the inlet through the fire engine which can reach each floor. So on the inside of the building you then plug your hose into the outlet, open the valve and you have full flow water on whichever floor you might need it. They initially plugged in the hoses on the second floor outlets but since there was hardly any smoke it was decided to plug the hoses into the third floor — thus less stairway to carry a fully charged hose. This was done for us and we were handed the branch of the hose and we made our way up the stairwell to the

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fourth floor and found flat 16. Flat 16 was the fire flat. NORTH KENSINGTON crew were already there, FF Danny BROWN and crew manager BATTERSBEA were in the doorway to the flat.

The flat door was open; I did not see who opened it. I think there are 6 flats on each floor. The communal part of the fourth floor was a bit smoke-logged, but I could still see my surroundings. I was number one which means I was at the front of our two-man crew. I was holding the branch of the hose and FF O'HANLON was holding the thermal imaging camera. The entrance hallway to the flat was very narrow — you could not fit two abreast — so we filed in a line of four with the NORTH KENSINGTON crew ahead of us. They moved forward and then the hallway came to a T—shape. Because we were behind, we told them to go right and we'd go left. The hallway was completely smoky — you could not see a thing. On a scale of one to ten — with ten being the smokiest — it was a definite nine. That is when you rely on the thermal imaging camera regarding obstacles. Due to the masks I could not smell anything. It was quite hot but I think that had more to do with carrying the hoses up flights of stairs, the gear we were wearing and the equipment we were carrying, rather than hot from a fire. It was also the middle of summer.

We headed left into a small recess and continued to follow the left hand wall till we reached bedroom one, opposite our starting point. The first room I think was a bedroom; it was not so smoky inside; on the scale of one to ten I would give this room a six. I think I remember seeing a bed and a wardrobe in the room. Considering the time in the morning there is usually a good chance that you may find someone in bed at this time. The way we search is that we start with either the left or the right hand wall and the search is done by feel as visibility was minimal. I would go first, being number one, and keep to the wall; then O'HANLON would be beside me making more of a sweep of the room to cover more area in the search. We communicate through speech, which is a bit muffled because of the gear we have on, but if you shout loud enough you can speak to each other. Once we were certain that the first bedroom was clear, we left and continued back to the hallway and came across the second bedroom. Visibility again was about five or six. I cannot remember exactly what I saw in the room but I knew it was another bedroom. The main priority at this stage is to make sure there are no casualties, also that there is no fire. We searched this bedroom like we searched the previous one — me against the wall and O'HANLON sweeping the room. There was no fire or casualties. I cannot remember if the doors to the bedrooms were open or closed.

At times when you are searching a room you can ventilate the room, but this has to be done in a controlled manner. I didn't open any windows in any room; this is normally done by someone in

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command as the inrush of air can have a catastrophic effect and if not done properly can cause a fire to change dramatically. We then came out of the second bedroom and the next room we came to was a lounge/dining room. The conditions were very similar to the bedrooms but the lounge was a bit more smoky. We did a sweep of the lounge and then came back out to the hallway. We were about to enter the kitchen when we met up with the fire crew of NORTH KENSINGTON. They told us that the fire was in the kitchen and they had knocked most of it out, but they were running low on air so had to leave. Myself and FF O'HANLON went into the kitchen as it was still a little bit alight. We went over to the right of the kitchen and could see there were flames on top of the cupboards up high, around the top of the rear of the fridge, I would say at least six feet up, still a little alight. We knocked out the remaining fire in the kitchen and made our way to the end of the kitchen where there was a large gap where the window was. Due to this ventilation visibility in the kitchen was quite clear; the window was either open or had failed with the heat as there was no longer glass in it. It was not hot in the kitchen due to flames as most of them were out. With the window failed it was ventilated, but we were warm with it being summer and all the gear we were wearing. Once we had the flames out then we did a search of the kitchen just to make sure there were no casualties.

I could see loads of debris raining down outside, some of the debris was alight and falling into the trees down below. We had the feeling that the fire had caught alight outside from remembering the SHEPHERD's BUSH fire the previous year. We reached as far out as we could with the branch, being careful not to fall out the window as we had the cylinders on our back. We put the trees out and sprayed as much around the window as we could. I had the feeling that the fire had spread to somewhere else with all the debris falling. I tried to see where the fire had travelled to but I could not. I can only assume that the fire went out and up but I could not see from my position inside the flat. At this stage we realised there was nothing more we could do from the position we were in as there was no fire left in flat 16. So I checked my air and I still had a little bit left so we made one more search of the flat just to double check every room, to make sure that there were no casualties, that we did not miss anything in the dark and in a strange area. It is good practice before you confirm that there are no casualties to have a second search. So from the kitchen we worked our way back in reverse. We went to the lounge next. This time we saw the bathroom and toilet so checked these rooms even though NORTH KENSINGTON crew would have already checked them. I do remember the doors to these two rooms were already open. Conditions were clearing now the fire was out; there was no kitchen window, the smoke was dissipating. We made our way to the bedrooms then back down the hallway and out through the front door of flat 16 to the

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communal area. I did not pass on the information through our sets as these are not the most reliable pieces of equipment and it is difficult to talk through your mask. I waited until we went back to the bridgehead before I relayed our information. On the way to the bridgehead the conditions I noticed were not any worse than what they were when we initially went up, I assumed it was all outside at this stage. When FF O'HANLON and I returned to the bridgehead I relayed everything to watch manager O'KEEFE. He was there at the bridgehead with other BA crew waiting to go in. The information that I relayed is not written down. O'KEEFE would then pass that information on to the next BA crew that was going to attend, eg, he would tell the next crew that the fire was out in flat 16 but they should attend the adjacent flats to make sure there was no spreading as the fire was still ongoing. The condition of flat 16 from what I remember as we left it, it was smoke damaged throughout the flat, but only appeared to be fire damage in the kitchen where the flames had been.

From there we went back outside to the appliance and took our BA cylinders off. We noticed that it was now a huge fire. We initially went into the Tower to a kitchen fire in one flat and now we were coming out to twelve to fifteen floors alight. We have come out of the lobby to the entrance and noticed that there are a lot more fire engines as well as other emergency services, like police and ambulance, now in attendance. It had only been 20-30 minutes from when we first went in and now there were huge orange flames up the side of the Tower. I was quite stunned at this stage. I went into the tower to put one fire out and came out to a major incident. Although while in the flat I felt the fire had spread somewhere else, I had no idea the extent it had spread. If asked to put this on a scale this was a ten. We were asked to put out a kitchen fire and now to come out to a massive fire. I had never experienced a situation like this in my whole career.

We went back to our appliance and changed our cylinders; with the extent of the fire we knew that we would be needed again. The spare cylinders are kept in the appliance; there should always be spares cylinders for BA wearers. We made our way back to the Tower; it's approximately 50 yards from the appliance to the Tower. There were now a lot of people about, not only the residents but members of the public and others coming to look at the fire. There was a lot of police and I could see ambulance crews. The only thing I was concentrating on was that we had to go back in and help put out the fire.

Inside we went up one flight of stairs to a type of mezzanine floor and there was now a lot of BA wearers, standing waiting to be deployed. We were what you might call in a holding pool, the next person waiting their turn, everyone is in a group of either 2 or four. We then went to the second floor and it was around

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then they moved the bridgehead to the third floor. I've no idea why. Bridgeheads can get moved, usually when it is safe to do so. We were on the second floor for quite a while (I don't know how long exactly) before we got moved to the bridgehead (on the 3rd). When we got to the third floor where the bridgehead was I noticed the BA boards were set up. There were three BA boards running at the time with only one FF from NORTH KENSINGTON by the name of Alex ST AUBIN looking after them. He looked like he was under a lot of pressure because there was a lot going on. There are 12 BA sets logged to one board so he potentially had 36 BA sets he was monitoring. Every BA wearing FF has a plastic tag called a tally connected to his BA kit. When a BA FF is deployed he will hand over his Tally to the person looking after the BA board, this is put into a slot in the board and the board will digitally read how much air that set has, the number of the set and the time registered going in. The person looking after the BA board will also write down the FF name. That was a lot of boards; most jobs would only require one board — very rarely would you go over.

As we could see FF ST AUBIN was under a lot of pressure, O'HANLON and I took a board each from him to help out and gain some control. The wearers were coming down and new BAs going up. They were also bringing casualties down, carried or dragged. Most seemed to be unconscious or dead at that time. A few were being helped down but most of them were being carried.

During this time I think something was lost in communication; not all of BA wearers helping the dead or injured knew that the bridgehead had been moved so they bypassed the third floor. They did not come back to the board to take their tally so we would know they were out safe with enough air. The move of the bridgehead would have been communicated through radios normally, but sometimes in extreme circumstances, like this was, you may not hear or even acknowledge the information that is been given to you. Some FF were coming down and they had absolutely no air left in their cylinders. They would literally be sucking on their masks and pulling their masks off.

Also the board would have shown them out of air. Under normal circumstances no one would run out of air; you would be at the bridgehead with at least ten minutes of air left. Normally when a BA crew comes out with a casualty they would hand over the casualty to someone else — whether it be another FF or ambulance crew — and then go to the bridgehead to pick up their tally. But the circumstances in GRENFELL TOWER were so extreme with so many casualties there was no one to hand them over to. The bridgehead was being bypassed; you would not think of picking up your tally if you literally have someone's life in your hands.

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We eventually managed to get the boards cleared, which means that we handed back some of the tallies to the BA wearers and everyone on the board was accounted for. FFs had called over the radio that they were out the ones that didn't manage to get back to the bridgehead to pick up their tally. It was around this time they decided to move myself and O'KEEFE to the ground floor. I think they wanted to glean information from the first fire fighters that went in as if they were creating a plan for the next crews that were going to enter. We were passing information to FULHAM watch manager GLYNN (first name), he wanted to know how many flats on each floor, how many bedrooms in each flat, and the type of layout. He was passing this information to the next crews that were coming in. This was all done in the lobby area.

At this stage walking casualties were streaming out and that is when I noticed a woman with her daughter. The woman was hysterical and screaming about her daughter. I didn't know what she was saying because I could see her daughter was right there with her. During this I could hear one senior officer, whose name I don't know, shouting that we should evacuate the building. He was standing in the doorway of the lobby helping casualties to get out. But the debris was raining down so heavily that one minute he was inside and the next he was out.

I got the feeling that senior management were worried that the whole building might collapse like the Twin Towers. I have never seen debris like it. Some of it was the size of car bonnets crashing to the ground. It was not just light bits of sponge floating down; it was heavy debris, like sheets of metal and some of it was alight. It was extremely dangerous. The woman that I'd noticed earlier was now more hysterical. Someone helped take her daughter outside and I went to help her outside but the debris was really heavy. So I wrapped some of my tunic around her, put my helmet on her head and walked her outside. It wasn't until we were outside with the daughter she had been with in the lobby, that it transpired that it was another daughter and her husband she was talking about; they were still in the Tower — she wasn't sure where. All I could think was to go back inside to try and find them and I think I said to her I will go back and look for them. I did not want her to go back into the Tower to look for them herself. Once you have people out you want them to stay out of the building so as not to put themselves or others in danger. I left her safely with the ambulance people and I went to go back towards the Tower again. The debris was still raining down and the noise was pretty fantastic and there was no way that I could safely get back inside the Tower again. I think she was a white lady wearing night clothes like pyjamas, she appeared to be approximately forty years old and the daughter she was with appeared to be ten to twelve

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years old, I think she was foreign, the reason I say this is because of the breakdown of communication regarding her daughter, I think the daughter that was still inside was older than the daughter she was outside with. The woman was saying that they were left behind, but I do not know where behind, in the flat or in the stairwell.

I then saw a couple of FF from NORTH KENSINGTON at their appliance pulling at a hose reel. Their appliance was probably the closest parked appliance to the Tower, so I went over to help them. There are four lots of 20 meter hose reels on each side of the appliance and you can disconnect them all and attach them together to make 80 metres and these FF were doing that. Shortly after that a fire investigation officer came over to us and he asked if any of us had been inside yet. I told him that I had and he started asking me questions and taking notes on his clipboard. I think he was an investigator from DOWGATE but I don't know his details. I relayed the information about flat 16 to him, the same information that I'd given before to watch manager O'KEEFE. From there I met up with a FF from my watch by the name of Ben FELTON. At this stage I had been separated from O'HANLON because I had taken the lady with the daughter out of the Tower. FELTON had just come out of the Tower and was on his way back to his appliance which was located about 400 yards from the tower as it was a later arrival. He seemed pretty stunned or in shock. I helped him off with his cylinder as he was going to change it over. From there I was helping out with hose management and general duties. By now it had turned into a major incident. The cylinder van had turned up, but could not get in close to the fire because of the number of vehicles around and cordons up. So the cylinder van parked and the cylinders had to be transported as close to the tower as possible for the BA crew to change. They had to be put in a sheltered area so that the falling debris would not fall on them, and also in a place that was safe for FF to be able to collect them. These were rolled in on a trolley from the trucks carrying them.

I find it hard to recall things from this stage on because I was now exhausted. I walked around some of the Tower with Ben FELTON taking in the enormity of the fire but I still did not really register the scale of destruction that was happening. I didn't go all the way around due to the cordons but just to see the scale of the fire. EDBA started turning up; they may have already been on the ground but now I knew they needed the Extended Duration Breathing Apparatus crew, these are fire fighters that are trained to spend longer with the BA equipment on, they have two cylinders on instead of the one so they are able to keep going for approximately 45 minutes. It was initially a 40-pump fire and then they bring relief and so 20 would have come to relieve us. They slowly implement that the 20 take over from the 40, but within

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that it was a little chaotic because there was so little room to manoeuvre. There was a long wait for us to get out to allow the relief crew to get in. We were given some food while we were waiting around for this to happen. I cannot remember the whole process at this stage because our appliance was moved and I had to find it. From there we had to go to PADDINGTON — that was approximately 12:00 — where we were told to write notes on the night. We did speak to some OH person but she said that this was probably not the right time to do it. I could not say if I was thinking about it. We arrived back at Hammersmith at approximately 14:00.

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