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Monday, 21 January 2013

(10.00 am)

(Proceedings delayed)

(10.12 am)

Housekeeping

THE CORONER: Yes, good morning everybody. Apologies for the delayed start this morning. A couple of the jurors are experiencing some difficulties in getting here, but I understand that the remaining jurors are on their way so we'll start with the evidence as soon as they arrive and have settled down.

Before they come, I think it might be helpful if we just sort out some of the outstanding matters. The first, I think, might be the questions which the jurors raised during the site visit on Friday. My thanks to all of those who got together and made a careful note of the jurors' questions. Mr Maxwell-Scott, I think you and others have put together some printed copies for us?

MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: That's right. I think Mr Atkins is printing them off at the moment. The version that is being printed off has been circulated by email.

THE CORONER: Yes.

MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: The proposal is to give that document to the jurors today so that they have a written record of the questions that they asked and the answers that they

1 received, and also, of course, the questions that the
2 other half of the group asked and the answers that they
3 received.

4 THE CORONER: Yes. Okay. That's helpful.

5 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Then the issue for discussion would be
6 what to say to the jurors either today or perhaps
7 tomorrow about the mechanism for answering the questions
8 which were not answered on the day.

9 THE CORONER: Okay, that's helpful. Can I invite brief
10 submissions on that? Who would like to begin.

11 MR MATTHEWS: It might shorten matters a bit, because
12 I think we've all seen Mr Hendy's helpful email and
13 I think where we are is that everyone thinks it's a very
14 good idea for the jury to have a copy of the questions
15 and for evidence to address the answers to that. I saw
16 the suggestion was that we should attempt to identify
17 witnesses in advance who can answer the questions. That
18 struck me as quite a difficult task because I think for
19 a number of the questions, it may be we need to ask more
20 than one witness. I'm not sure of some of the answers
21 to the questions and some of them may involve people's
22 recollection of the building at the time.

23 On the other hand, others of the questions strike me
24 as we could put our heads together and actually answer
25 them ahead of the evidence, some of the non-contentious

1 questions. So it may be -- certainly my suggestion is
2 rather than attempt to identify witnesses in advance we
3 attempt to answer some of the non-contentious questions
4 and assure the jury that all the questions will be asked
5 of witnesses that we feel will be able to answer them in
6 due course.

7 THE CORONER: I see. That's helpful. Thank you. Yes. Any
8 observations?

9 MR WALSH: I'd agree with Mr Matthews as far as that is
10 concerned. While on the face of it it's a good idea to
11 identify witnesses in advance where they're obvious and
12 clear, I would have thought that because of the
13 nature -- in some respects, the generic nature of the
14 questions, it would suffice to inform the jury that we
15 all have very much in mind the questions and that when
16 appropriate witnesses come to the witness box in the
17 fullness of time we'll make sure that they're answered,
18 largely because some of these questions need to be
19 answered by more than one witness and some of the
20 questions who we may think may be able to answer them
21 may say, "I can't answer that."

22 So the LFB is perfectly happy if the jury are told
23 that we have the questions very firmly in mind and they
24 will be addressed as the evidence is given. I think
25 probably Mr Crowder can answer a great many of them,

1 because of course the analysis of the building was done
2 immediately after the fire, so he's in a position to say
3 what was in place and what wasn't in place at the time
4 that materials were removed for analysis.

5 THE CORONER: Thank you. Any dissenting voices, or anything
6 to add to that? Mr Hendy.

7 MR HENDY: Just to add, madam, that I would suggest that it
8 might be convenient for counsel to meet at the end of
9 today and see which questions can be answered in
10 an uncontroversial manner and just have a look at those
11 remaining ones to see whether it is possible to identify
12 at least one witness who's going to try and deal with
13 those and we'll obviously indicate to the jury that
14 there may be others who can deal with those. So I think
15 a bit of consensus might be the way forward here.

16 THE CORONER: Thank you. Any other questions?

17 Mr Maxwell-Scott, do you want to make any observation?

18 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Simply to me that it seems desirable that
19 at least some of the questions were answered are
20 answered at this stage. I would have thought we could
21 identify some where the answers are uncontroversial and
22 answer them now. I see there may be difficulty with
23 other questions in identifying a particular witness at
24 this stage who can answer them, and I think a discussion
25 between the advocates will help to identify a way

1 forward.

2 THE CORONER: Well, that's very helpful. Thank you all very
3 much. I think it would be desirable, and it would be
4 very helpful for jurors, if we could answer as many of
5 their questions at this stage, so I welcome very much
6 the suggestion that there should be some informal
7 discussion, maybe after close of business today, to see
8 how many questions could be answered, and maybe as part
9 of that discussion you can, between you, identify which
10 witnesses might be allocated some questions, as it were,
11 and where we, as yet, are not sure which witnesses can
12 deal with that. I think that would be very helpful.

13 All right, shall we leave it like that and review it
14 after close of business today. Thank you very much.

15 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: At what stage would you like the written
16 questions to be handed out to the jurors?

17 THE CORONER: I'd like them to be handed out straight away,
18 as soon as the jury come in this morning, because that
19 will give them the results of their efforts on Friday,
20 so I think it would be helpful if they had the
21 questions. We'll explain to them that we'll explain
22 later how we're going to deal with answering those
23 questions.

24 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Mr Atkins is printing them out at the
25 moment, so I don't have them with me in court yet.

1 THE CORONER: All right, thank you very much. Well, I think
2 that it is unlikely that we shall have all jurors
3 present before about 10.45 at the earliest, so there is
4 going to be a short time delay. What I would just like
5 to raise before we have a break, whilst we're waiting
6 for the jury to be assembled: I'd just like to have
7 a look at today's timetable. We have planned three
8 firefighters and two police officers. I think that's
9 right, is it, Mr Maxwell-Scott?

10 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: That is correct, yes. Firefighters
11 Badger, Farmer and David Sharpe, and police officers
12 Tebboth and Esangbedo.

13 THE CORONER: Yes. That's going to be quite a lot of
14 evidence to get through in what will turn out to be
15 a truncated day. I'm very anxious that we do get
16 through all of these witnesses today. The serving
17 members of the emergency services, whilst they're
18 waiting here to give evidence, aren't free for their
19 normal duties and I'm very reluctant to ask them to give
20 up a day from their duties today and then not have their
21 evidence and then have them come back another day. So
22 we're looking at five witnesses and there are quite
23 a large number of you who might want to ask questions.
24 I think it would be helpful if we could get some feel
25 from all of you as to how long you anticipate being

1 asking questions of these witnesses. If it looks as if
2 the timetable is going to run away, then I shall have to
3 consider putting a time limit on the questioning which
4 is put. It's necessary that we run this in
5 an proportionate way.

6 So first we'll have a Mr Badger, I think; is that
7 right?

8 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: That's right, madam.

9 THE CORONER: Yes. Mr Maxwell-Scott, do you have a feel of
10 how long you might need to take him through the
11 evidence?

12 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Perhaps half an hour to 45 minutes for
13 each of the three firefighters.

14 THE CORONER: Okay.

15 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: They should all be broadly the same
16 length, so the first one will be a good guide.

17 THE CORONER: Mr Hendy, are you able to help, please?

18 MR HENDY: I very much doubt I will be more than ten
19 minutes, possibly five.

20 THE CORONER: Thank you. Mr Dowden?

21 MR DOWDEN: No more than five minutes for all of them.

22 THE CORONER: You do realise I'm writing all this down.

23 Ms Al Tai?

24 MS AL TAI: No more than five minutes, dependent upon what's
25 been asked already.

1 THE CORONER: Okay. I can't quite remember who's next in
2 line. Mr Matthews?

3 MR MATTHEWS: I think a maximum of five minutes, if
4 anything.

5 THE CORONER: Thank you. Yes, Mr Compton?

6 MR COMPTON: Madam, I'm unlikely to have any questions of
7 any of the firefighters at all throughout this case.

8 THE CORONER: Thank you very much, okay. Does that bring us
9 to Mr Walsh?

10 MR WALSH: Yes, I think so. Assuming Mr Maxwell-Scott
11 adduces from the statements all of the relevant evidence
12 as to the circumstances in which these officers were
13 fighting the fire, I would be no more than 15 minutes,
14 possibly less.

15 THE CORONER: Okay. Well that makes one hour 25 minutes per
16 firefighter, so I think we really should try and keep to
17 that if at all possible. And then, Mr Maxwell-Scott,
18 the two police officers?

19 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: I would hope that my questions of each of
20 them might be more in the order of 15 minutes each.

21 THE CORONER: Right. Okay, can we go through the list
22 again. Mr Hendy?

23 MR HENDY: Madam, if Mr Maxwell-Scott is bringing out all
24 aspects of their evidence, then obviously there's far
25 less for anybody else to ask. I wouldn't imagine that

1 I'd be more than ten minutes with anybody.

2 THE CORONER: Thank you. Mr Dowden?

3 MR DOWDEN: Very few questions.

4 THE CORONER: Ms Al Tai?

5 MS AL TAI: Again, similarly, probably no more than five
6 minutes.

7 THE CORONER: Okay. Mr Matthews?

8 MR MATTHEWS: I don't expect to ask anything.

9 THE CORONER: Mr Compton?

10 MR COMPTON: Madam, the same from me.

11 THE CORONER: Thank you. And Mr Walsh? Sorry, I probably
12 have the order wrong on those two.

13 MR WALSH: Well, since I'm standing, possibly no more than
14 five minutes, and possibly not at all.

15 THE CORONER: All right, well that's very helpful. If we
16 can keep roughly to that timetable then it looks as if
17 we ought to be able to deal with all five of those
18 witnesses today and not be finishing late. So that's
19 extremely helpful. All right. Is there anything that
20 anyone would like to raise before we have a short break
21 before we ask the jurors to come in? All right. Thank
22 you very much. Well, in that case, I hope that we can
23 get a message to you to let you know as soon as we have
24 an assembled set of jurors and we'll be able to begin.
25 Thank you very much.

1 (10.25 am)

2 (A short break)

3 (10.45 am)

4 THE CORONER: Thank you. Do sit down. Yes, can we invite
5 the jury to come in, please?

6 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Madam, there are now sufficient copies of
7 the jury questionnaires for them to have one each.

8 THE CORONER: Lovely. Thank you very much.

9 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: We're going to propose that they be
10 included at tab 16 of the jury bundle.

11 THE CORONER: Thank you.

12 (In the presence of the Jury)

13 THE CORONER: Members of the jury, good morning and well
14 done for making it in in very difficult travelling
15 circumstances. Thank you very much, and thank you very
16 much all for attending the site visit on Friday. I hope
17 you all found it helpful. Following the visit, some of
18 the legal teams have put their heads together and have
19 prepared a typed version of the questions which you put
20 at the site visit on Friday, and Mr Maxwell-Scott has
21 copies -- in fact, Mr Graham's handing them out to you
22 now. Mr Maxwell-Scott, do you just want to explain the
23 format?

24 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Yes, what we have done is to copy down
25 the questions as they were expressed and where I gave

1 answers, the answers as I gave them, but we've edited
2 the document so as to put the questions into themes or
3 topics, so they're grouped together when they're about
4 the same topic. They're also colour-coded so that the
5 questions and answers from the morning are in black type
6 and those from the afternoon are in red, so you'll be
7 able to see what arose in the group that you were not
8 part of. What we propose at this stage is that you
9 include those in your jury bundles at tab 16.

10 THE CORONER: Members of the jury, we'll get back to you
11 probably tomorrow morning to explain how we're
12 suggesting that those questions should be answered, all
13 right? Thank you very much.

14 Yes, so shall we now begin with the first witness
15 today, Mr Maxwell-Scott.

16 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Yes, madam. The first witness today is
17 James Badger.

18 THE CORONER: Yes, Mr Badger, are you in court? Would you
19 come forward please. Thank you.

20 JAMES BADGER (affirmed)

21 THE CORONER: Thank you, Mr Badger. Do sit down. Do help
22 yourself to a glass of water if you would like. You'll
23 see that there's a microphone in front of you which is
24 lit by a red light. If you could keep your mouth fairly
25 close to that, please, so that it picks up what you're

1 saying. When you're giving your answers, could you
2 speak reasonably slowly because we're making
3 a transcript of everything that's said and the
4 transcribers need to be able to keep up with you.

5 A. Yes, certainly.

6 THE CORONER: Thank you very much.

7 Questions from MR MAXWELL-SCOTT

8 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Mr Badger, can you give the court your
9 full name.

10 A. Yes, it's James Alexander Badger.

11 Q. At the time of the fire at Lakanal House on 3 July 2009,
12 how long had you been employed by the London
13 Fire Brigade?

14 A. A little over 15 years.

15 Q. Do you still work for the London Fire Brigade?

16 A. Yes, that's correct.

17 Q. Unless I indicate otherwise, my questions today will be
18 directed to how things were done on or before the date
19 of the fire. Is it right that you were a firefighter at
20 the time of the fire?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. We understand that there are several different reasons
23 why a firefighter might visit a building like Lakanal
24 House. If I could just go through those with you.
25 Firstly, they might attend an operational incident,

1 which could be a fire but might be something else, like
2 something being stuck in a lift?

3 A. Yes, that's correct.

4 Q. Or they might attend a home fire safety visit?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. Or they might attend a familiarisation visit, sometimes
7 called a 72D visit?

8 A. That's correct.

9 Q. Can you help the court with which of those types of
10 visits you had previously made to Lakanal House before
11 3 July 2009?

12 A. I can't recall any in detail, but it's more than likely
13 I attended operational calls there and also
14 familiarisation visits.

15 Q. So you would certainly have been in some of the communal
16 areas in the building before?

17 A. Yes, that's correct.

18 Q. Can you recall whether you'd previously been inside
19 a flat?

20 A. I can't recall any specific event, no, but it's more
21 than likely I would have done.

22 Q. Can you recall the last time you visited before
23 3 July 2009, so in broad terms whether it would have
24 been weeks before, months before or years before?

25 A. No, I'm afraid I can't.

1 Q. What I'm going to do now is ask you a series of
2 questions about the knowledge that you had of certain
3 features of Lakanal House before you arrived there on
4 3 July 2009. So firstly, were you aware that the
5 building had a single central staircase?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. Did you know that there were signs within the building
8 giving information about flat numbers?

9 A. I don't recall.

10 Q. Let me show you what I mean. If you see this photograph
11 here. This is the ground floor lift lobby area. You
12 can see a sign on the wall above the lifts, and that's
13 a close-up view of the same sign.

14 A. I don't recall those signs specifically in relation to
15 Lakanal House but they are very common on most high rise
16 buildings.

17 Q. Before 3 July 2009, did you know how many floors there
18 were?

19 A. I wouldn't have been able to -- not -- no, not from
20 memory, no.

21 Q. Did you know that the flats were what are sometimes
22 called maisonettes, which means that they were on two
23 floors and had an internal staircase?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. Did you know that the flats were all essentially

1 identical in layout inside?

2 A. No.

3 Q. Did you know how many flats there were in the building?

4 A. No.

5 Q. Did you have any understanding of how many flats there
6 were per floor or pair of floors?

7 A. Not from memory, but it would have become apparent once
8 we got to the fire floor.

9 Q. I'll come back to that in a moment if I may. Sticking
10 with your knowledge before you attended the fire on
11 3 July 2009, did you know that inside each flat on the
12 upper level it was possible to access a balcony on
13 either side of the building?

14 A. Not either side, but I'm aware there are escape
15 balconies in Lakanal House.

16 Q. So you knew that there were escape balconies like the
17 one that you can see in this photograph?

18 A. Yes, that's correct.

19 Q. This is a view from outside the building, where you can
20 see those balconies on alternate floors. That's
21 a close-up view taken from the same place, showing
22 an escape balcony and more on higher levels. So you
23 knew before 3 July 2009 that there were escape
24 balconies?

25 A. Yes, that's correct.

1 Q. And that their purpose was self-evidently to provide
2 a means of escape from flats?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Did you know that the balconies were not part
5 partitioned? In other words, that it was possible to
6 walk the full length of them?

7 A. No, not 100 per cent sure. Can I expand on that
8 slightly?

9 Q. Yes.

10 A. Sometimes there's lots of -- people put items of
11 maybe -- that they can't fit inside their flats, and
12 therefore they sometimes hinder a possible escape route,
13 and on some buildings there's occasionally doors put in
14 for security reasons and they may hinder firefighters,
15 although on this particular incident I don't remember
16 any particular doors in Lakanal.

17 Q. So you knew that the purpose of the balconies was to
18 provide an escape route?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. And therefore that they ought not to be blocked or
21 partitioned?

22 A. That's correct.

23 Q. But you make the point that it's always possible that
24 residents may have put something on the balcony that
25 would make it more difficult to walk the full length of

1 it?

2 A. Yes, that can be quite common.

3 Q. Did you know where the doors at the end of the

4 balconies -- that, for example, we can see in that

5 photograph 45 -- led to?

6 A. Sorry, can you repeat the question?

7 Q. If you look at the photograph that's on the screen,

8 photograph 45, you can see a white door at the end of

9 the balcony. We saw that from a different angle.

10 That's the same door just taken obviously from

11 a different perspective.

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. Did you know where those doors led?

14 A. They would have ultimately led to the central staircase.

15 Q. If I could just come back to the question I asked you

16 a few questions ago, which was about whether you knew

17 that the flats had balconies on either side of the

18 building. So if you look at the 3D image that's on your

19 screen and if you look in the bottom right hand corner,

20 one flat is shown coloured in blue and another in green.

21 Those are two different flats and they interlock, and

22 then, to the left in the larger images, you can see how

23 they interlock. So each of these two flats has, on the

24 upper level, a kitchen and a lounge, and each of those

25 flats has access to a balcony on the east side and

1 a balcony on the west side. If you could just help the
2 court as best you can with whether you knew or
3 appreciated that before 3 July 2009?

4 A. No, I can't specifically recall accurately. I'm aware
5 that there would have been at least one escape balcony
6 but possibly not on both sides.

7 Q. I will turn now to ask you questions about what you did
8 on the day of the fire itself, and as we go along I will
9 try and remember to ask you to point out any places
10 where you gained a knowledge of the layout of the
11 building that you didn't have when you first arrived to
12 fight the fire on 3 July.

13 A. Okay.

14 Q. If you could also feel free to say at any stage: "At
15 this point I discovered the flat numbers worked like
16 this", or anything like that. That would be very
17 helpful.

18 A. Okay.

19 THE CORONER: I think we're about to have the fire alarm
20 tested, so assuming it sounds for only a short time
21 I don't think there's any need to evacuate the building.
22 (Pause) Right, we can continue, thank you.

23 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Is it right that as at 3 July 2009 you
24 were based at Peckham fire station?

25 A. Yes, that's correct.

1 Q. As a result of a mobilisation call, you and your
2 colleagues on the pump and the pump ladder travelled to
3 Lakanal House?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. If you could take up the jury bundle at tab 8. (Handed)
6 We've listed there, hopefully accurately, the names of
7 all of you who were on duty in Peckham fire station that
8 afternoon and travelled to the fire on the pump ladder
9 and the pump?

10 A. Yes, I can see that, yeah.

11 Q. Does that look correct?

12 A. It does, yes.

13 Q. Just help us with who was travelling with you?

14 A. If I recall correctly I was with Crew Manager Willett
15 and Firefighter Sharpe, and I can't remember who else
16 was on the back with me.

17 Q. Possibly Michael Farmer?

18 A. Possibly.

19 Q. When you arrived, the fire was in progress and is it
20 right that your fire engine was the first to arrive?

21 A. Both machines arrived at the same time, so yes.

22 Q. What was your task on arrival?

23 A. I was tasked to try and gain control of the fire lift.

24 Q. What does one use to do that?

25 A. A drop key.

1 Q. If I can take you back to one of those photographs we
2 saw earlier. That means you were working somewhere
3 round this area; is that right?

4 A. Yes, that's correct, yes.

5 Q. I think you attempted to gain control of the lift using
6 the drop key on more than one occasion but you weren't
7 able to do so?

8 A. That's correct.

9 Q. Can you just explain to the jury what it was you were
10 trying to do?

11 A. What the drop key does is it allows firefighters to have
12 dedicated access to that lift, so therefore it can't be
13 interfered by anybody else in the building. So we have
14 control of the lift and nobody else, and therefore that
15 would facilitate us riding up and down with equipment
16 and possibly utilising it for rescues as well.

17 Q. So you weren't able to use the lift in that special way
18 that firefighters wish to use it?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. But was the lift nevertheless used to take people and
21 equipment up to higher floors in the building?

22 A. Yes, it was, yes.

23 Q. I think it's right that three firefighters were sent up
24 initially to form a bridgehead on the 7th floor?

25 A. Three plus myself. I took the stairs.

1 Q. So you took the stairs. The other three, do you
2 remember who they were?

3 A. It would have been Crew Manager Dennis and Firefighter
4 Fournier and Firefighter Simons from my memory.

5 Q. Did those three take the lift or the stairs as far as
6 you recall?

7 A. The lift, as far as I remember.

8 Q. Can you recall whether at that time, or at any time
9 later in the course of the day, you noticed the sign?

10 A. No, I wouldn't be able to recall whether I remembered it
11 on the day. It is likely I would have done. It's
12 a pretty standard thing to notice when you enter
13 building.

14 Q. You made your way up the stairs to the 7th floor.
15 Whilst you were doing so, did you come across any
16 residents making their way down the stairs?

17 A. It's likely, but I can't remember any specific detail on
18 that.

19 Q. You didn't, for example, assist any of them downstairs?

20 A. I can't remember, I'm afraid.

21 Q. Did you say anything to any residents coming down the
22 stairs to discourage them from leaving the building?

23 A. No, that would have been unlikely.

24 Q. You don't remember doing that?

25 A. I don't remember, no.

1 Q. And you think it unlikely that you did?

2 A. Yes, it's most unlikely.

3 Q. So we've reached the point that you were at the
4 7th floor. Is it right that you then met up there with
5 the firefighters you've mentioned already, Crew Manager
6 Dennis and firefighters Fournier and Simons?

7 A. That's correct.

8 Q. If I show you three photographs to get you to assist us
9 with where you were on the 7th floor. That's
10 a photograph taken in the area of the lobby by the
11 lifts. It's across the lobby from the lifts, and you
12 can see the dry riser there. That's a photograph taken
13 in broadly the same area because you can see to the left
14 one of the lift shafts which was blocked off at the time
15 and then you can see a door leading to one of the two
16 corridors off the central lobby?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. Do those photographs assist with helping you to remember
19 where the four of you were?

20 A. Where I was, definitely. Not so sure about the others,
21 but specifically where I was, yeah.

22 Q. Where were you?

23 A. My initial task was to gain access to the dry riser and
24 then facilitate hose from the dry riser up to the fire
25 floor.

1 Q. So you were working in the vicinity of the dry riser?

2 A. Exactly where that is. That's correct, yeah.

3 Q. What was Crew Manager Dennis doing at the time?

4 A. Myself and Crew Manager Dennis were assisting the

5 breathing apparatus teams to try and lay the hose from

6 the dry riser up to the fire floor. This is in order to

7 preserve the breathing apparatus teams as obviously

8 their work rate will be a lot harder later on.

9 Q. So at this stage, is it right that none of you would

10 have been wearing breathing apparatus?

11 A. Myself and Crew Manager Dennis definitely, because we

12 didn't have any, and unlikely for Firefighter Simons and

13 Firefighter Fournier.

14 Q. What were conditions like in that part of the building

15 at the time in terms of the level of smoke?

16 A. From a firefighter's point of view they were tolerable,

17 but they may be different for a member of the public

18 that isn't used to smoke and fire conditions.

19 Q. But you initially at least were tolerating them without

20 breathing apparatus?

21 A. Yeah, it's quite common, yeah. It's manageable.

22 Q. Did you remain in that area when the first crew was

23 committed to fight the fire on the 9th floor?

24 A. Generally, yes, although I would have been helping to

25 move the hose up and down the stairs. So generally in

1 that location, but I would have been moving around to
2 try and move the hose.

3 Q. Did there come a time when a Firefighter Farmer arrived
4 at the bridgehead?

5 A. Yes, it was quite shortly, but I don't recall exactly
6 when.

7 Q. Did he then get tasked with entry control?

8 A. Yes, he did.

9 Q. Up until his arrival, were you dealing with entry
10 control?

11 A. I can't remember exactly.

12 Q. Do you think any of the crews were committed before
13 Mr Farmer arrived?

14 A. It's unlikely, but it's possible due to the pressures of
15 time.

16 Q. Do you recall hearing members of the public shouting and
17 screaming?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. And engaging in some conversations with the public?

20 A. Yeah, I engaged in many conversations over the period of
21 that time.

22 Q. As in face-to-face conversations?

23 A. Face-to-face and at least once, maybe twice, someone
24 handed me a mobile phone to speak to residents that were
25 throughout the building.

1 Q. So you are working either in that area near the
2 dry riser on the 7th floor --

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. -- or on the staircase between the 7th floor and the 9th
5 floor?

6 A. That would be correct, yeah.

7 Q. And it's in that context that you came across residents?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Were they leaving the building, using the staircase?

10 A. I can't say for certain, but I would assume they would
11 be, yes.

12 Q. Did you say anything to residents to discourage them at
13 that stage from leaving the building?

14 A. No, not if they were already on their way out. No,
15 I wouldn't have done that.

16 Q. Did you hear any of your colleagues say anything to
17 anyone to discourage them from leaving?

18 A. No.

19 Q. You say you spoke with relatives on their mobiles?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. In other words, somebody who was a resident had a mobile
22 phone and handed it to you, either on the 7th floor
23 lift lobby area or on the stairs, and said, "Please
24 speak to the person on the other end of the line"?

25 A. Yes, that happened on at least one occasion, maybe

1 twice.

2 Q. What sort of thing did you say to people on the other
3 end of the line?

4 A. I cannot recall exactly but it was just -- obviously as
5 you can imagine -- as you can appreciate, there's lots
6 going on, so probably I was trying to work out whether
7 they needed reassurance or rescuing.

8 Q. To the extent that you got useful information about
9 whether they needed rescuing, what did you do with that
10 information?

11 A. It's unlikely they would have needed rescuing because
12 I would have remembered that and there would have been
13 a different outcome, so it's probably reassurance that
14 in my opinion at the time they needed.

15 Q. Do you remember what floors the people you were speaking
16 to were on?

17 A. No. I remember the numbers were something in the 60s.
18 Sorry, I should say the flat numbers were probably in
19 the 60s.

20 Q. Yes, that's what I assumed. So the people you spoke to
21 on mobiles that were handed to you -- the people on the
22 other end of the line -- had flat numbers in the 60s, as
23 you recall?

24 A. That's correct, yes.

25 Q. Did there come a time when the conditions where you were

1 changed?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. In what way?

4 A. The smoke became intolerable.

5 Q. Because you were still not wearing breathing apparatus?

6 A. No, that's correct, yeah, I wasn't wearing breathing
7 apparatus.

8 Q. Was there an increase in radio communication?

9 A. Yeah, an exponential increase, a massive increase in
10 radio communication, which made it very difficult.

11 Q. So a massive increase in radio messages coming to you
12 and your colleagues at the bridgehead?

13 A. Yes, correct, yes.

14 Q. Was it yourself who was bearing the brunt of taking the
15 radio messages?

16 A. From what I remember, yes.

17 Q. And then discussing them with Crew Manager Dennis?

18 A. As best as we can, yeah, considering we wasn't always
19 next to each other, so ...

20 Q. How physically demanding was the work that you and Crew
21 Manager Dennis were doing at the bridgehead?

22 A. I'd say it was near my physiological limit.

23 THE CORONER: Sorry, I didn't hear that?

24 A. Near my physiological limit.

25 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Can you give the jury a flavour of what

1 it was that was so physically demanding?

2 A. Well, I'd already made progress to the 7th floor via
3 foot. Trying to move hose, charged hose, up and down
4 two floors in smoke conditions is overwhelming within
5 a matter of minutes, and then obviously that's coupled
6 with the added pressure of trying to deal with multiple
7 members of the public and trying to disseminate radio
8 traffic that's relevant to you and not so relevant. So
9 yeah, you're overheating massively and you're at the
10 limits of your exhaustion, really.

11 Q. Is it right there came a time when you tried to get some
12 fresher air and some respite by going down to the 6th
13 floor and opening a door?

14 A. I don't remember going down but I do remember trying to
15 open a door to give some respite to the other breathing
16 apparatus crews that were waiting.

17 Q. I think at this point it would be helpful to have a look
18 at the statement that you signed on 12 August 2009,
19 which is at page 81 of the statements bundle. (Handed)
20 You see on page 81, you identify that as your witness
21 statement?

22 A. Yes, it is, yeah.

23 Q. Then over the page, about two thirds of the way down by
24 the lower hole punch?

25 A. Yes, I've seen that now, yes.

1 Q. Just leading up to it, there's a topic we've been
2 talking about. The radios were extremely busy. You
3 remember by this stage you were exhausted, as you and
4 Crew Manager Dennis were doing all the work to preserve
5 the other officers who were wearing breathing apparatus
6 so they saved all their energy. Then it says this:

7 "I opened a door on the 6th floor using a Southwark
8 multi-lock key. This was an attempt to give the crews
9 who were up on the floor some respite. When I opened
10 the door, I think it was to the escape balcony. I can't
11 confirm that."

12 You say:

13 "It didn't help. The smoke was heavy and
14 intolerable."

15 Firstly, do you now remember that?

16 A. Yes, I do.

17 Q. What is a Southwark multi-lock key?

18 A. It's a standard Southwark Council high security key that
19 we carry on our lift keys to give us access to mostly
20 lift motor rooms and other secure areas.

21 Q. Would all of your colleagues from Peckham fire station
22 carry that?

23 A. No, it's only on a set of lift keys.

24 Q. So you had one?

25 A. Yes, also because I needed to open the dry riser, and

1 that was locked as well.

2 Q. Should we assume that one of your colleagues on the
3 other appliance from Peckham would also have had one?

4 A. We could have -- we should assume that, yes, but not
5 necessarily so.

6 Q. Your best evidence as to whether anyone else from
7 Peckham fire station would have been carrying one at the
8 time?

9 A. I would suggest no.

10 Q. Just take a moment to orientate yourself, looking at
11 that photograph. That is taken from one of the
12 odd-numbered floors, the 3rd, as it happens, looking
13 down to the floor below and looking at a door. That
14 door is the reverse side of this door here, one of the
15 balcony doors. Does that help you to remember whether
16 that was the door that you opened, or a door that looked
17 like that?

18 A. It's unlikely. I think -- from memory, I think I opened
19 a door that gave us access towards that door but not
20 necessarily that door itself.

21 Q. You think it was a door like that?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. Depending on which side of the building the door you
24 opened was, you would have entered either a small lobby,
25 not much bigger than the podium you're sitting on now,

1 or a bigger lobby of a similar size to the lift lobby
2 where the dry riser is. Can you recall if you entered
3 into a small space or a space similar to the one you'd
4 been on the floor above where the dry riser was?

5 A. I'm sorry, I can't recall that, no.

6 Q. You think you opened up a door like that?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Your statement says:

9 "When I opened the door I think it was to the escape
10 balcony."

11 Can we just be clear what you're saying here. Do
12 you recall ending up on the escape balcony?

13 A. No, it may have been from previous visits. I may
14 have -- at this moment now, I can't remember -- I can't
15 remember that detail on that particular day.

16 Q. Can you assist at all with whether you ended up
17 somewhere that was indoors or outdoors?

18 A. I remained indoors, I know that, and I know the crews
19 didn't have any respite from the smoke, so I would be
20 assuming it would still be indoors.

21 Q. Did there then come a time when the officer in charge of
22 the bridgehead ordered all crews to withdraw from the
23 7th floor bridgehead?

24 A. Yes, he did, yes.

25 Q. Some crews were obviously above the bridgehead at that

1 time wearing breathing apparatus?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. Did you have to wait for them all to return to the
4 bridgehead before you personally went down?

5 A. Yes. It's just the right thing to do. You can't
6 really -- you don't want to leave your guys up there,
7 obviously, because you're their lifeline really.

8 Q. In your statement you say, at the bottom of page 782,
9 you stayed to count all the fire crews back:

10 "Once I was satisfied all the fire officers were
11 accounted for, I withdrew."

12 A. Yes, that's correct.

13 Q. Can you remember at all approximately how many
14 firefighters you waited for to come down from higher
15 floors before you went down?

16 A. No, I can't remember.

17 Q. Can you recall whether any of them brought residents
18 with them?

19 A. No, but I am aware residents were being assisted out by
20 firefighters but not necessarily wearing breathing
21 apparatus.

22 Q. Is it right that on your way down you found a family
23 sitting in the stairwell and helped them down the
24 stairs?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. So we're now at a point in time when you are out of the
2 building and all of your colleagues were out of the
3 building because the bridgehead had been brought down?
4 A. The bridgehead was compromised, yes.
5 Q. Initially it was planned to relocate it within the
6 building below the 7th floor, but in fact it was thought
7 necessary to continue to move it down and out of the
8 building?
9 A. I believe that was the decision made by the officer in
10 charge, yes.
11 Q. In terms of what you went on to do, is it right that you
12 assisted in turning over a car in order to give
13 an aerial ladder platform better access to the building?
14 A. Yes, I was given that tasking.
15 Q. Then in due course you put on breathing apparatus and
16 were committed into the building?
17 A. Yes.
18 Q. With Firefighter Farmer?
19 A. Yes.
20 Q. I'm just going to try and assist you with when that was.
21 This is in the advocates' bundles at page 1037.
22 (Handed) Take a moment, because this is probably not
23 a document you've ever seen before; is that right?
24 A. No, that's correct; I've not seen this document before.
25 Q. And probably not a format you are familiar with?

1 A. No, not at all.

2 Q. What it is is it's a document that summarises data
3 that's downloaded from breathing apparatus. If you look
4 in the middle of the page -- towards the top of the page
5 you can see your name, towards the right, under, "Wearer
6 name": "Badger".

7 THE CORONER: Can you see that, Mr Badger?

8 A. Yes, sorry, beg your pardon, yes.

9 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: And then if we stick in the row where
10 your name is and look to the left, we see some times.
11 Our understanding is that what this document is
12 indicating is that you were committed into the building
13 at 17.47, the time that we see in bold. I understand
14 it's your recollection you were committed with
15 Firefighter Farmer?

16 A. That's correct.

17 Q. I don't need you to find it but that fits with what is
18 on this document, where he is also recorded as being
19 committed at 17.47.

20 A. Yes, I can see that.

21 Q. The task that you were given to deal with was to tackle
22 a fire on the 5th floor?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. That's what you went and did?

25 A. Yes, that's correct.

1 Q. There came a time later when you noticed unconscious
2 casualties being removed from the building?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. You assisted colleagues to carry one of them down the
5 last few steps?

6 A. That's correct, yeah.

7 Q. And then you noticed that CPR was being administered?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Then, later on again, you were committed back into the
10 building in breathing apparatus; is that right?

11 A. Yes, that's correct.

12 Q. According to this page we're looking at, that would have
13 been at around 19.08. Second wear, the bold number,
14 19.08?

15 A. Okay, yes.

16 Q. On that occasion, your task was to go up to the 9th
17 floor?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. When you got there, you found the corridor was
20 completely destroyed on one side of the building?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. And then you worked on the other corridor?

23 A. Yes I did.

24 Q. On that floor. You stayed up there until your warning
25 whistle went to show that you were running low on air?

1 A. That's correct.

2 Q. Did you in fact have some difficulty leaving because one
3 or more firefighters was caught in wiring that was
4 hanging down?

5 A. Yes, we did have difficulty leaving, yes.

6 Q. That is a serious recognised hazard for firefighters,
7 isn't it?

8 A. There's been quite a few reported fatalities.

9 Q. What I want to turn to now is whether, in the course of
10 all of those tasks that you carried out on the day which
11 you've been telling the court about, you learnt more
12 about the layout of the building?

13 A. I can't really say specifically, due to the nature of
14 the work load on the day. Only in hindsight now I know
15 more about the escape balconies, but on that day, the
16 only thing that was noticed was that we were -- on one
17 occasion, I believe we was tasked to go to a floor that
18 we wouldn't have actually been able to gain access to
19 because it was on the lower floor of the maisonettes.
20 I can't recall the exact detail of that.

21 Q. Do you perhaps mean you couldn't get access because it
22 was an upper floor and there wasn't a central corridor?

23 A. I think so, yes.

24 Q. I think much earlier on you were going to say something
25 about noticing flat numbering. If you take up the jury

1 bundle in tab 13. I'll bring it up on the screen as
2 well. Photograph 11. It's on your screen as well. Did
3 you come across these door entry panels on the day?
4 A. Yes, we did. I specifically remember that one when we
5 was tasked to go to the 9th floor, that specific fire
6 door itself. Not necessarily that one, but that look.
7 Q. That's a close-up. This in fact is at first floor
8 level, but it shows individual flat numbers?
9 A. Yes.
10 Q. Did you notice that on the day?
11 A. As I said, that particular design, yes, I would have
12 recognised that.
13 Q. Do you think that there came, at any stage, a point
14 where you realised that the flats, at their upper level,
15 had access to both sides of the building?
16 A. No, I can't -- I can't recall that.
17 Q. Did you hear flat numbers being discussed, either
18 face-to-face or in messages over the radio?
19 A. More than likely, but again I can't specifically recall
20 any detail on that.
21 Q. Did you ever build up any mental picture of where
22 different flat numbers were located in the building?
23 A. I probably would have had a rough idea.
24 Q. Just to illustrate, from the outside, that's what the
25 building looks like if you go there. Obviously you

1 don't know what the flat numbers are. If we look at
2 that image, that superimposes the flat numbers onto the
3 previous view.

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Can you help the court with to what extent in the course
6 of the day you ever built up a mental picture that
7 looked like that, or began to look like that?

8 A. My image wouldn't have been entirely accurate per se but
9 I would have been generally aware -- almost -- more than
10 likely aware that the 11th floor would have consisted of
11 numbers in their 70s and 80s.

12 Q. Can you help the court with how far through the day it
13 was before you built up that sort of understanding?

14 A. It's hard to tell, really, because on my initial access,
15 seeing the information where the flats are on the floor
16 level by the ground floor lift lobby, that would have
17 given me an initial idea of where the -- where the flats
18 are in relation to the floors, which is vital unless you
19 had excellent prior knowledge of that building.

20 Q. Mr Badger, my final question is this: can you assist the
21 court with what single additional thing you think would
22 have helped you most on the day of the fire to carry out
23 firefighting and search and rescue operations? So it
24 could be an additional item of knowledge or additional
25 training or additional resources in the form of extra

1 firefighters or extra equipment.

2 A. Sorry, can you just -- is that in relation to just
3 general firefighting high rise fires or this particular
4 incident?

5 Q. You on the day. You got there with the first appliance
6 and you were there for many hours. You had a variety of
7 tasks. You wore breathing apparatus twice, which is the
8 maximum that anyone's allowed to do, so if you could
9 give the court the benefit of what you experienced and
10 help us, as best you can, with what single additional
11 thing you didn't have or didn't know on the day you
12 think would have most helped you on the day to get
13 a better outcome than in fact happened.

14 A. Just from our initial -- when we initially turned up,
15 maybe more resources, manpower, and a better
16 understanding, ie plans of maybe where the building was
17 and how the layout was. As you can appreciate, there's
18 dozens and dozens and dozens of high rise flats in
19 Peckham, so we have a very, very general understanding
20 and memory of these buildings. So yeah, better plans
21 initially.

22 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Thank you very much. Those are my
23 questions.

24 THE CORONER: Thank you. Yes, Mr Hendy.

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Questions from MR HENDY

MR HENDY: Good morning, Mr Badger, I represent three of the bereaved families. I only have a few questions for you.

A. Morning.

Q. I wonder if you could be shown, please, the jury bundle at divider 12, page 2.

A. Yes.

Q. If you look down to the fifth entry, there's an entry for 16.23.57, E371, Peckham pump ladder. That was the pump ladder that Mr Willett was crew manager on. He told the jury that your appliance was in convoy with him and would have arrived at much the same time. Obviously he couldn't say whether it's 16.23.57 or not, but if it was, your appliance would have arrived at about the same time. We can see reference to your appliance a little further down -- that's E372 -- which is listed as coming in about three minutes later. Do you see that?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you agree that your appliance would have arrived within a few seconds of his?

A. Straight away. They were in convoy, so ...

Q. Right. So if it's 16.23.57 for him, it's 16.23 or 24 for you?

A. Definitely.

Q. Thank you. Then if you just look over the page, please,

1 to page 3, the second entry down, 16.29.20, is E355,
2 Old Kent Road aerial ladder pump. That seems to have
3 arrived just over five minutes after you and
4 CM Willett's appliances. Do you agree that that's about
5 right?

6 A. I don't recall that but that would be -- that would be
7 pretty accurate, considering where the location of their
8 station is.

9 Q. Thank you very much. Something else from
10 Mr Willett's -- perhaps we could ask for it to be put
11 up, if Mr Atkins would be so kind. We want the witness
12 statements at page 44. This is from Mr Willett's
13 witness statement. At the bottom of the page, he says
14 this, right at the bottom of the page, last paragraph:

15 "As soon as we left the fire station, I could smell
16 smoke as the appliance proceeded up Southampton Way.
17 Our journey took us parallel to Lakanal and I could see
18 a large amount of smoke issuing from the building. As
19 we approached the building from the access road, there
20 was a lot of burning debris falling from the building."

21 Is that your recollection as well?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. Thank you. I want to ask you about the conversations
24 that you had with members of the public, and it might be
25 easiest if we ask you to look at your own witness

1 statement, which is at page 82.

2 THE CORONER: Mr Hendy, not too fast for the transcriber,
3 please.

4 MR HENDY: Of course. I'm not sure the jury can read that.
5 Is it possible to enlarge it just very slightly? We
6 want the middle chunk of the page. Thank you very much.

7 If you look at that, Mr Badger, and go down some
8 dozen lines, there's a line which begins "with charged
9 hoses"?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Do you see that?

12 A. Yes, I do.

13 Q. Let's just read on together. That is what you've
14 written:

15 "Whilst this was happening, I could hear members of
16 the public shouting and screaming. I engaged in
17 a couple of conversations with the public. I spoke with
18 relatives on their mobiles to try and reassure them.
19 I was probably on the 7th floor at that time. I tried
20 to ascertain whether they needed rescuing or reassuring.
21 There was a lot of movement in the corridors, members of
22 the public and fire crew members arriving. I think
23 I spoke to a resident from number 60-something. She was
24 female. She had moved to her neighbours. It was
25 probably 66 or 67."

1 And then you talk about the bridgehead being
2 compromised.

3 Can I just clarify a couple of points with you on
4 that. You said that you'd probably remember if somebody
5 had asked to be rescued, so what you were probably doing
6 on the phone was reassuring?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. And the reassurance you would have given is: "Stay put.
9 Firefighters are on the job in the building and spraying
10 the fire", or words to that effect?

11 A. I don't recall, but it would have been words to that
12 effect.

13 Q. Yes. The people that you spoke to who were on the
14 staircase who gave you the mobile phones to speak to
15 their relatives, presumably they needed reassurance as
16 well?

17 A. Yes, yeah, most definitely.

18 Q. Is it likely that the reassurance you gave them was much
19 the same? "Stay put. There are loads of firefighters
20 downstairs. There's hoses all over the place. Go back.
21 We know you're there. Stay put"?

22 A. Unlikely I would have given that same reassurance if
23 they were already on the stairwell.

24 Q. Well, let's just think about that, Mr Badger. You have
25 somebody coming down the stairs with a mobile telephone

1 and you are reassuring the relative. Now, that person
2 on the stairs is hardly likely to leave their relative
3 upstairs while they make their way out of the building,
4 are they?

5 A. I can't comment on people's personal ...

6 Q. Don't you think it's more likely that you were
7 reassuring everybody: "If you don't have smoke and fire
8 in your flat, just stay where you were"?

9 A. No, that's unlikely. Only within the compartment.

10 Q. Sorry, say that again?

11 A. It's only likely I would have asked them -- told them to
12 say if they were already within their compartment, in
13 their flat.

14 Q. I follow. Moving on the last matter I want to ask you
15 about, it's this. Could we ask you to look at your
16 witness statement at page 83.

17 A. Yeah.

18 Q. You spoke to Mr Maxwell-Scott about this, but if you
19 look about a dozen lines down, there's a line that
20 begins with the word "inhalation".

21 A. Yes, I see that.

22 Q. "I was given a bottle of water. I then assisted with
23 turning a car over in Dalwood Street. This was to aid
24 the aerial level platform to get to the building. I was
25 then asked to put on breathing equipment with

1 Firefighter Farmer. I checked in with the bridgehead."
2 Now, Mr Maxwell-Scott has established with you the
3 breathing equipment was activated at 17.47.20, so just
4 after 5.45, yes?
5 A. Yes.
6 Q. Presumably it would have taken you five minutes to get
7 that gear on and get up to the bridgehead?
8 A. I can't comment. I can't remember the times now.
9 Q. It wouldn't have been much longer, would it?
10 A. It would have been as expedient as possible, due to the
11 nature of the fire.
12 Q. Of course. Well, I won't push you if you can't do it,
13 but it has to be between a minute or so and ten minutes
14 at the most, hasn't it?
15 A. From what level to where?
16 Q. From when you leave the turning over of the car and
17 assisting the aerial pump ladder to when you activate
18 your breathing set?
19 A. I can't recall that, I'm afraid.
20 Q. Okay. Could we look, please, at the plan which is in
21 the jury bundle at divider 11 at page 4. There's a map
22 here of Lakanal House --
23 A. Sorry, could you say that again? What page?
24 Q. Page 4. In your witness statement you say you assisted
25 with the turning over of a car in Dalwood Street. Now,

1 we can see Dalwood Street to the north of Lakanal House?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. The purpose of turning the car over was to manoeuvre the

4 aerial ladder pump to the west side of Lakanal House,

5 was it not?

6 A. You say the west side?

7 Q. Yes.

8 A. No, I don't recall that specific, no. All I'm aware of

9 is it was to facilitate the aerial ladder platform doing

10 the task it was given. The specific nature of the task

11 would have out of my control, really.

12 Q. The west side, of course, was the sunny side, it being

13 in the middle of the afternoon. The east side was in

14 the shadows side. Does that help you at all?

15 A. It helps me, but it makes no difference to your initial

16 question. You're asking me what tasking was given?

17 Q. No, I'm just asking you whether you were aware that the

18 ALP was to proceed to the west side of Lakanal House?

19 A. No, I'm not aware of that.

20 Q. You don't know. You were called away, really, before

21 you discovered where it was to go?

22 A. Yes, correct.

23 Q. Thank you very much. That's very helpful.

24 THE CORONER: Thank you. Mr Dowden?

25 MR DOWDEN: No, thank you.

1 THE CORONER: Thank you. Ms Al Tai.

2 Questions from MS AL TAI

3 MS AL TAI: Good morning, Mr Dowden. I act on behalf of
4 Mark Bailey, Catherine Hickman's partner, the occupant
5 of Flat 79. In response to a question Mr Maxwell-Scott
6 asked you just moments ago about what single resource or
7 item might have affected the outcome, you answered in
8 response to that perhaps more manpower and resources; is
9 that correct?

10 A. On the initial, yes, that's correct.

11 Q. I'm so sorry?

12 A. On the initial attendance, yes.

13 Q. Thank you. Can I take you to page 83 of your statement,
14 please, Mr Badger.

15 A. Sorry, 83?

16 Q. Please.

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. Is that up on the screen? If you could just, please,
19 look at the fourth line down. It starts at the third
20 line, where you state -- I'll start from the beginning
21 actually:

22 "This family were sitting in the stairwell near the
23 fire door which splits the flats. The family were
24 a black family with a young child, possibly an infant.
25 They seemed disorientated. The female was crying.

1 I shouted at them to get up. I became distressed myself
2 as I was suffering with smoke inhalation."

3 At this point in time, were you surprised that you
4 hadn't had additional resources to assist you in respect
5 of, for example, minimising the fact that you were
6 exposed to smoke inhalation?

7 A. No, I wasn't. Not at this particular time no.

8 Q. Even though you were distressed and you were suffering
9 such smoke inhalation?

10 A. The initial -- on all high rise fires, the initial first
11 few minutes are always -- you're always undermanned and
12 stretched initially, so it isn't uncommon for
13 firefighters to be suffering from smoke inhalation.

14 Q. I see. Thank you. If I could take you just further to
15 that page again. This is the second paragraph we're
16 looking at now, and this is the second line, where it
17 starts -- I'll read the paragraph preceding that to make
18 it more clear for the jury:

19 "My final task was to attend the 9th floor and
20 assist crews with a serious fire in progress. On the
21 way up to the 9th floor, I was aware of numerous
22 breathing apparatus teams. Some were collapsed on the
23 stairs from exhaustion."

24 In respect of your earlier answer to
25 Mr Maxwell-Scott, did you find this unusual, that these

1 teams were collapsed from exhaustion whilst on the
2 stairwell?

3 A. It wouldn't have been unusual for the heat conditions,
4 but it was unusual, and in my honest belief, it was
5 because of the travel time taken to walk up the flights
6 of stairs because of the bridgehead being compromised.

7 Q. So is that --

8 A. So the guys were under breathing apparatus and having to
9 walk up a whole high rise block before they even thought
10 of starting fighting the fire.

11 Q. Was that the only reason it was unusual?

12 A. Do you mean the fire was unusual or just --

13 Q. No, the fact that these teams were sat down in the
14 stairwell from exhaustion?

15 A. It's very rare for me to see firefighting teams collapse
16 on the stairwell. Once you finish your tasking, you
17 normally make all efforts to get back to the entry
18 control point.

19 MS AL TAI: Thank you, Mr Badger, that's all I have.

20 THE CORONER: Mr Matthews.

21 Questions from MR MATTHEWS

22 MR MATTHEWS: Can I just get your help. Can I just ask that
23 you get the advocates' bundle, file 1. It's, I think,
24 actually page 21 of file 1. If you can find it -- it's
25 just on screen. It's a photograph.

1 A. Yeah, I can see that.

2 Q. I think to help us if we can have it turned the right
3 way up. It's really just if you can help us with what
4 you were being asked by my learned friend Mr Hendy just
5 before. That's the west side of Lakanal. That's the
6 access road.

7 A. That was the initial access for us, yes.

8 Q. Right. If you look in the distance of that photograph,
9 we can see another fire engine parked further down?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Do you know where you parked, where the first two
12 appliances parked?

13 A. It would have been at that location but I can't recall
14 the exact place.

15 Q. So it would have been down the access road?

16 A. Yes, that's correct, yeah.

17 Q. Do you know if there was anything stopping your easy
18 entrance into that access road, where the other fire
19 appliance is parked now?

20 A. Nothing stopping per se, but we was aware of falling
21 debris, so it's just a hazard to be aware of.

22 MR MATTHEWS: Right. Thank you very much.

23 MR COMPTON: I have no questions, thank you.

24 THE CORONER: Thank you. Mr Walsh.

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Questions from MR WALSH

MR WALSH: Mr Badger, I ask questions on behalf of the Fire Brigade. Just a few quick ones. The first thing I want to explore with you is the information which you had as you left Peckham fire station was that there was a fire in Flat 65 on the 9th floor?

A. I can't remember the flat number but I was aware that we was going to a high rise fire, yes.

Q. Right. So you're going to a fire and upon arrival, what were you able to see?

A. What looked like a serious high rise fire in progress.

Q. Right. Your expectation of fighting that fire, very briefly, was what, strategy-wise?

A. That we would make rapid progress upstairs and probably be able to deal with it.

Q. Probably be able deal with it?

A. Deal with it -- put the fire out successfully.

Q. Was there something unusual, however, about the fire? If so, just explain briefly what it was, in your view.

A. Only insofar as in -- it later became known to us that the fire had obviously dropped down and then spread latterly, and that's very uncommon.

Q. Insofar as resources are concerned, at the initial stage of being sent to a high rise fire, which, in your view, you were going to be able to deal with, the number of

1 pumps sent was four?

2 A. Yes, correct.

3 Q. For your expectation of what the fire was at the time,
4 was that sufficient?

5 A. It was sufficient for us, yeah, normally as -- we're
6 quite an experienced drill crew, so that would normally
7 be enough for us.

8 Q. Yes. At what point, then, did you take the view, in
9 answer to questions from Mr Maxwell-Scott -- did you
10 come to the view that actually more manpower at the
11 initial stages might have been helpful?

12 A. More manpower is always -- with ridership levels -- we
13 was riding, I think, with only two firefight on the back
14 that day, and to safely implement procedures, and then
15 coupled -- coupled against the weight of attack and the
16 more(?) pressure, sometimes it would be beneficial to
17 have extra firefighters on a fire engine.

18 Q. Yes, because what, of course, you told us about is that
19 although you had an initial expectation of how the fire
20 would be fought and dealt with, you're on the bridgehead
21 floor and there came a point, effectively, when the
22 smoke-logging became intolerable, as we heard from the
23 statement?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. Just help the jury with what that means actually, in

1 straightforward terms. What were you and other
2 firefighters experiencing in relation to smoke-logging
3 on the bridgehead floor?

4 A. Almost at the point of passing out, complete exhaustion,
5 not being able to breathe properly.

6 Q. Was that something that surprised you? Was that unusual
7 in your experience?

8 A. It's not unusual to -- it's not unusual to have
9 uncomfortable smoke conditions, but they became
10 unusually intolerable quite rapidly as well.

11 Q. It became unusually intolerable quite rapidly?

12 A. Yes, that's correct.

13 Q. Which resulted in the need to pull away from that
14 bridgehead and move it down?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. Now you've told us that before you could leave, it was
17 necessary to make sure that all of the crews who had
18 been admitted into the building were accounted for?

19 A. Yes, that's very important.

20 Q. Why is that?

21 A. Because basically we're their lifeline. It's important
22 for us to make sure we account for all of our team
23 members. So if we had then exited from that they would
24 have had no idea and they would have had no support.

25 Q. Yes. Would you just have a look at photograph 41,

1 please, behind divider 13 of the jury bundle. There we
2 are. That is the photograph of the other side of the
3 escape balcony door that you were taken to by
4 Mr Maxwell-Scott earlier, and I think what you've
5 indicated is that when you sought to allow the other
6 some of the other firefighters clean air in which to
7 step out into, you opened by using the drop box key --
8 A. No, the multi-lock key.
9 Q. Forgive me, the multi-lock key -- the security door
10 we've seen, and that allowed access to the area like
11 that?
12 A. I don't recall that. All I remember is opening the
13 initial security door, but the reasoning was to try to
14 get to this particular area we see here.
15 Q. Got you. So the multi-lock key that you used in the
16 security door allowed access into an area. We're
17 looking there, though, at the other side of an escape
18 balcony door which gives access to an area like that.
19 Would you have been able -- it's gone. Would you have
20 been able to use the key that you had on you, or some
21 mechanism, to open a door like that?
22 A. I can't recall that exactly, no, but that was my intent.
23 Q. You don't know whether the key would have opened that
24 door or not?
25 A. No, I don't know.

1 Q. All right. Now, you were giving advice to various
2 people as they were coming down the stairs?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. And you say you gave reassurance to people on mobile
5 phone?

6 A. Yes, I spoke to people on their mobile phones, yes.

7 Q. In answer to questions by Mr Hendy, you said that you
8 would give advice and reassurance to people already in
9 their compartment along the lines of which he described,
10 namely: "Stay where you are. There are firefighters
11 here dealing with it", if they were in their
12 compartment?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. What do you mean by "compartment"?

15 A. Within their -- within their flat. Unless the flat is
16 actually affected by fire itself, we would expect them
17 to be relatively safe.

18 Q. Right. Unless the flat is itself affected by fire, you
19 would expect it to be relatively safe?

20 A. Yes, that's correct.

21 Q. When you use the word "compartment", what significance,
22 if any, does that have?

23 A. Compartment insofar as if they were in their flat and
24 the flat isn't compromised by fire, then they should be
25 safe.

1 Q. Yes. Why is that?

2 A. Because they're designed -- buildings are designed for
3 fire protection.

4 Q. Right, I see. Thank you very much. If people are
5 coming downstairs with mobile phones and they're not in
6 their compartment, what advice would you give to them?

7 A. I'd want them to leave as quickly as possible.

8 Q. Yes. Thank you very much. When you left the
9 building -- I'm not sure if we have had this, actually.
10 When you left the building -- page 83 of the bundle,
11 which is the third page of your statement. If we could
12 have that, please.

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. We've heard that on the way down that you assisted
15 a family. If we look at the top of page 83 of the
16 statements. It's very difficult to read but I'll read
17 it out anyway. Just if you would confirm this:
18 "The family was sitting in the stairwell near the
19 fire door which splits the flats. The family were
20 a black family with a young child, possibly an infant.
21 They seemed disorientated. The family was crying.
22 I shouted at them to get up. I was distressed myself
23 and I was suffering with smoke inhalation."
24 Is that right?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. "I was finding it difficult to breathe. I was exhausted
2 and I knew we needed to get out. I grabbed the child
3 and I told the male to hold on to his partner. The
4 female was still crying. They weren't speaking. I then
5 led them out down the stairs and I handed them over to
6 other fire crews before exiting."

7 Yes, is that right?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. And then you say this:

10 "I can't remember what happened next. It was my
11 intention to return to the bridgehead, but the next
12 thing I remember, I was lying dazed on the grass near
13 a fire engine. I was suffering the effects of smoke
14 inhalation and I was given a bottle of water."

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. Just help us a little bit more about the symptoms that
17 you were experiencing as you lay dazed on the grass?

18 A. It's hard to explain, really. Just completely
19 overwhelming, struggling to breathe. Medically, it has
20 an effect on your -- you feel tired. So you feel more
21 tired, probably because of the carbon monoxide in the
22 smoke. Yeah, you just feel completely exhausted and
23 confused, probably.

24 Q. Yes, and I think you've been asked questions already
25 about seeing other firefighters when you were committed

1 into the building again, collapsed on the stairs as you
2 went up?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. And that actually is because it was necessary pretty
5 well from the beginning of the incident for access to
6 the upper floors to be accessed by firefighters using
7 the stairs and nothing else?

8 A. Yes, that's correct.

9 Q. Yes, all right. Thank you very much.

10 THE CORONER: Thank you very much. Members of the jury, do
11 you have any questions for Mr Badger?

12 THE FOREMAN OF THE JURY: Yes, madam. Is that working?

13 THE CORONER: It is, yes.

14 THE FOREMAN OF THE JURY: Why did the drop key not work?
15 Did this cause issues in terms of residents trying to
16 use the lift rather than the stairs, disrupting the
17 tasks of firefighters? And must firefighters use stairs
18 from the bridgehead rather than the lift?

19 THE CORONER: Mr Badger, perhaps if you could --

20 A. I'll try and break that down. The reason for the drop
21 key -- I don't have an answer to that. Probably
22 a technical reason. It didn't have an impact initially,
23 but only insofar as the fact that we were lucky that
24 no-one was trying to use the lift.

25 As to the rest of the incident, I can't really

1 comment on how that impacted firefighters and members of
2 the public, but it would always be beneficial for us to
3 have use of a lift, notably for rescues, bringing people
4 in a expedient way back down to the ground floor.

5 THE CORONER: Thank you.

6 THE FOREMAN OF THE JURY: Can Officer Badger remember how
7 many people handed him mobile phones to speak to
8 relations outside the building?

9 A. Outside the building?

10 THE FOREMAN OF THE JURY: Just to clarify with my juror.

11 (Pause)

12 THE CORONER: Mr Badger, perhaps you could just clarify,
13 when you were handed a mobile phone, or mobile phones.
14 Where were you and where were the people to whom you
15 were speaking so far as you knew?

16 A. The only time I spoke to people on a mobile phone, as
17 far as I was aware, I was on the 7th floor, possibly on
18 the 7th floor, and I was speaking to people that were
19 still within the building.

20 THE FOREMAN OF THE JURY: Thank you. Another one: did the
21 fire pose a serious challenge to the fire fighters'
22 resources?

23 THE CORONER: That's quite a broad question.

24 A. All high rise fires are challenging, and they're always
25 resource-intensive, so I would probably give the same

1 answer to every single high rise fire that we attend,
2 especially in the first few minutes.

3 THE FOREMAN OF THE JURY: Thank you.

4 THE CORONER: Thank you very much.

5 THE FOREMAN OF THE JURY: Sorry we have a few. What advice
6 do firefighters give to people in flats, so (a) if
7 inside flat and there's no smoke, to stay in, (b) if
8 inside flat and there is smoke, stay in? Would you give
9 the same advice in both cases?

10 THE CORONER: Well, madam foreman, I'm not going to ask
11 Mr Badger to answer that question, because it's a very
12 broad question as to how firefighting should be
13 approached generally. Mr Badger's given his evidence as
14 to what he personally did, which is what he's able to
15 help us with this morning.

16 THE FOREMAN OF THE JURY: Okay, thank you.

17 Sorry, just one more question. When you moved the
18 bridgehead down, and you say you waited for your fellow
19 firefighters to come down, do they have the fact that
20 the bridgehead has moved relaid to them by their radios,
21 or is it a matter of when they get their signal from
22 their own equipment that it's time to move out in
23 general?

24 A. That isn't entirely correct. We didn't move the
25 bridgehead until all the guys were safely back down from

1 the upper floors to the bridgehead. Only once all the
2 crews were withdrawn --

3 THE CORONER: How were crews notified? I think that's
4 really --

5 A. Sorry?

6 THE CORONER: How were crews notified that they should move
7 down?

8 A. Just by radio communication.

9 THE FOREMAN OF THE JURY: Thank you.

10 THE CORONER: Thank you very much. Yes, Mr Badger, thank
11 you for coming. Thank you for the help you've given us
12 today. You're free to go if you would like but you're
13 welcome to stay if you would prefer.

14 A. Thank you very much.

15 (The witness withdrew)

16 THE CORONER: Yes. Will you be asking Mr Farmer to give
17 evidence next?

18 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Mr Farmer is the next witness. I don't
19 know if you'd like to take a short break or not?

20 THE CORONER: Yes, the transcribers are nodding. A short
21 break would be helpful. So just a five-minute break.

22 Members of the jury, if you want to leave your
23 papers on the tables, I don't think anyone's going to
24 interfere with them in just a five-minute break. If
25 you'd like to go with Mr Graham, and we'll be back in

1 five minutes.

2 (12.05 pm)

3 (A short break)

4 (12.15 pm)

5 THE CORONER: Yes, Mr Farmer, thank you very much. Just
6 take the oath, please.

7 MICHAEL FARMER (sworn)

8 THE CORONER: Thank you, Mr Farmer. Do help yourself to
9 a glass of water if you would like. If you could speak
10 close to the microphone, please, that would help, as the
11 sound system is good but the sound in the room's quite
12 difficult. Mr Maxwell-Scott is going to ask you
13 questions initially on my behalf and then there will be
14 some questions from others.

15 A. Okay.

16 Questions from MR MAXWELL-SCOTT

17 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Mr Farmer, could you give the court your
18 full name, please.

19 A. Michael Farmer.

20 Q. I'm going to be asking you questions about your
21 knowledge of Lakanal House and your involvement in
22 fighting the fire there on 3 July 2009. At that time,
23 how long had you been employed by the London Fire
24 Brigade?

25 A. Approximately seven years.

1 Q. Do you still work for the London Fire Brigade?

2 A. Yes, I do.

3 Q. Unless I indicate otherwise, my questions today will be
4 directed to how things were done on or before the date
5 of the fire. Were you a firefighter at the time?

6 A. Yes, I was.

7 Q. We understand that there are different reasons why
8 a firefighter might visit a building like Lakanal House.
9 So they might attend an operational incident, they might
10 attend a home fire safety visit, or they might carry out
11 a familiarisation visit, sometimes known as a 72D visit;
12 is that right?

13 A. That's correct, yes.

14 Q. Can you help the court with for which of those reasons
15 you had visited Lakanal House before 3 July 2009?

16 A. To the best of my recollection, it was for the community
17 fire safety visits, home fire safety visits, and for
18 incidents, small incidents.

19 Q. So we should assume that you would have been in some of
20 the communal areas?

21 A. That's correct, yes.

22 Q. But also, if you'd done one or more home fire safety
23 visits, we should assume that you've been in at least
24 one flat; is that right?

25 A. That's correct, yes.

1 Q. Can you help the court with approximately the last time
2 before 3 July 2009 that you had been to Lakanal?

3 A. No, I can't remember that at all.

4 Q. Can you assist with whether it would be a matter of days
5 or weeks, months or years?

6 A. Possibly months.

7 Q. At the time of the fire, I think it's right that you
8 were based at Peckham fire station?

9 A. That's correct.

10 Q. How long had you been based there?

11 A. At the time I think it was about four years.

12 Q. What I'm going to do now is ask you a series of
13 questions about the knowledge that you had of certain
14 features of Lakanal House before you arrived there on
15 3 July 2009.

16 A. Okay.

17 Q. So firstly, were you aware that there was a single
18 central staircase?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. Did you know that there were signs within the building
21 giving information about flat numbers? Let me show you
22 to assist. So this is the lift lobby area at ground
23 floor level and you can see a sign on the wall. I'll
24 now show you a close-up view of that sign, which is
25 here.

1 Additionally, within the central staircase there are
2 some signs on the wall. So there's the first floor
3 sign, and that's a close-up of it, and that's a 3rd
4 floor sign. Before 3 July 2009, do you think you were
5 aware that there were signs like that giving information
6 about flat numbers?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Did you know how many floors there were in the building?

9 A. No.

10 Q. From having been into a flat, were you aware that the
11 flats had two floors with an internal staircase?

12 A. Yes, I was.

13 Q. Did you know that the flats were all essentially
14 identical in layout?

15 A. No.

16 Q. Did you have a view on whether they were probably
17 identical in layout?

18 A. I would have assumed that.

19 Q. So you didn't know, but you would have assumed?

20 A. No, because on my previous visits I probably only went
21 into one flat.

22 Q. Did you know how many flats there were in the building?

23 A. No.

24 Q. Did you know that on the upper floor of each flat, the
25 flat extended the full width of the building? So you

1 had windows on one side and windows on the other side?

2 A. No.

3 Q. You'd been inside of a flat and you had understood that
4 there were two floors to a flat. Do you think you'd
5 been up to the upper floor?

6 A. Referring to the -- the dates, yes, I had been into the
7 flats. I couldn't remember the fact that it went right
8 across. As I said, I'd only been into one flat, so
9 remembering an entire layout is ...

10 Q. I appreciate that. Let's just take it in stages. Can
11 you recall whether you went into the upper floor,
12 whether you went upstairs?

13 A. I can't recall, no.

14 Q. Were you aware that there were balconies on alternate
15 floors on both sides of the building?

16 A. I was aware there were balconies, yes.

17 Q. Did you have a view on what their purpose was?

18 A. No.

19 Q. Let me show you some photographs of the balconies to
20 help you. That's a view from outside the building.
21 That's a close-up view from the same position. You can
22 see in that photograph balconies on alternate floors,
23 can't you?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. If I take you now to this photograph. This is taken

1 from one of those balconies. Do you think you'd been on
2 one of these balconies before?

3 A. No.

4 Q. You think you hadn't?

5 A. I hadn't, no.

6 Q. Going back to a view that you might have had before
7 3 July 2009, were you aware that subject to there being
8 any obstacles at ground level on the balconies that you
9 can't see in these photographs, it would be possible to
10 walk the length of one of those balconies?

11 A. Sorry, could you repeat the first bit?

12 Q. Looking at that photograph, it might be said that there
13 is nothing stopping somebody walking the length of one
14 of those balconies. Do you see what I mean?

15 A. Okay, yeah, looking at the photograph, yeah, it does.

16 Q. Obviously it's possible that there might be things at
17 floor level. Somebody might have left something outside
18 of the balcony which might make it more difficult to
19 walk along, but were you aware that in principle there
20 was nothing to stop somebody walking the length of the
21 balcony?

22 A. I wasn't aware at the time, no.

23 Q. Do you see the door at the end of the balcony, the white
24 door?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. Were you aware where that went?

2 A. No.

3 Q. Were you aware of how many flats there were on each
4 floor or pair of floors?

5 A. No.

6 Q. What I'm now going to do is to ask you about your
7 involvement on the day of the fire itself. We're very
8 interested in that, but we're also interested in the
9 extent to which, in the course of 3 July 2009, you might
10 have gained a knowledge of the building and some of the
11 features that I've been asking you about that you didn't
12 have before. If so, please do indicate at
13 an appropriate point that: "At this stage, I realised
14 that [for example] there were 14 flats per floor", or
15 whatever it may be, okay?

16 Is it right that you travelled to the fire in
17 a convoy of two appliances from Peckham fire station?

18 A. That's correct, yes.

19 Q. And that your fire engines were the first two to arrive
20 at the scene?

21 A. That's right, yes.

22 Q. What task did you carry out first?

23 A. Initially I assisted in setting up the firefighter lift
24 with equipment and setting into a hydrant.

25 Q. That was something that Mr Willett asked you to do; is

1 that right?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. Did you then help to move equipment up to the 7th floor?

4 A. Yes, I did, yes.

5 Q. Can you recall whether you did that using a lift or

6 taking it up the stairs?

7 A. Both. We used the lift that was on the ground floor at

8 the time, put the equipment in there with -- well,

9 additional equipment, and then I can't recall if I went

10 up as well in the lift but to get more equipment up

11 there I came down the stairs and up the stairs again.

12 Q. So you got some equipment up to the 7th floor level in

13 a lift?

14 A. Yeah.

15 Q. And then later on you also took some equipment up the

16 stairs to the 7th floor?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. When you got to the 7th floor, was that then set up to

19 what's known as the bridgehead?

20 A. Yes, it was, yeah.

21 Q. What task were you given at the bridgehead?

22 A. I was tasked to take over the entry control board.

23 Q. Was there an entry control board that was already in use

24 with some information written on it when you took over?

25 A. Yes, there was. There was a firefighter that was in

1 control of the board at the time, and I was tasked to
2 take over his position.

3 Q. Do you recall who you took over from?

4 A. No, I don't. It was a trainee firefighter.

5 Q. When you say a trainee firefighter, do you mean somebody
6 who was a trainee in terms of carrying out the entry
7 control officer function or somebody who was very new to
8 being a firefighter?

9 A. It was somebody very new to being a firefighter,
10 finished their training -- I don't know how long they'd
11 been in since training school, but they had -- they wear
12 diamonds on their helmets to indicate they're still on
13 probation, essentially.

14 Q. Sorry, I didn't catch that?

15 A. They have a diamond pattern on their helmets which
16 indicates they haven't fulfilled their -- they've only
17 been in an initial time.

18 Q. So it wasn't somebody you knew or recognised?

19 A. No.

20 Q. So it wasn't somebody from Peckham?

21 A. He wasn't from Peckham, no.

22 Q. Can you recall how many crews had already been
23 committed, according to the board?

24 A. I'm not 100 per cent sure. There was definitely a crew
25 of two in that had been committed, and I think there was

1 another crew that was just going in.

2 Q. Mr Farmer, you made two statements in relation to this
3 incident, one on 11 July 2009 and then another on
4 17 April 2010. Do you think your memory of the fire
5 would have been better at the time you made those
6 statements than today?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Would it help you to see them?

9 A. Yes. (Handed)

10 Q. If you look at the page with the number 102 in the
11 middle of the bottom. Do you recognise that as your
12 first statement dated 11 July 2009?

13 A. Yes, I do.

14 Q. That's two pages long. Then, over on page 104, there's
15 another statement of yours dated 17 April 2010.

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. If you turn on in that to page 105, about five lines
18 down, it says:

19 "When I took over the entry control board, I saw
20 there were two crews of two people committed."

21 A. Okay, yeah.

22 Q. Does that sound right?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. Your job was to be the breathing apparatus entry control
25 officer; is that right?

1 A. That's correct.

2 Q. And that primarily involves being in charge of the
3 board?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. And keeping track of crews that are committed when
6 they're maybe running low on air; is that right?

7 A. That's right, yes.

8 Q. Just in terms of where you were when you were doing
9 that, I'll show you a couple of photographs. That's
10 a photograph in an area near the lift lobby where the
11 dry riser is. That's a photograph in the same lobby but
12 looking in a different direction. You can see one of
13 the two lift shafts that was blocked off at the time and
14 out of operation -- that's in the left of the photo --
15 and then you can see a door leading to one of the
16 corridors. Were you in that lobby area when you were
17 acting as entry control officer?

18 A. I can't be 100 per cent where we were, exactly. I think
19 we were on the stairwell rather than the lobby area.

20 Q. You think you were on the stairwell itself. In an area
21 like that?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. When you were there, did you experience a number of
24 residents coming down the stairs, making their own way
25 out of the building?

1 A. Yes, a few residents were coming down, yeah.

2 Q. If you go to page 103, at the bottom of that -- this is
3 your first statement, so dated 11 July 2009. Do you see
4 the bottom four lines saying:

5 "I do recall, prior to using BA fairly near to the
6 start of the incident, assisting a woman with a baby and
7 a small child out of the building from the 7th floor and
8 handing them over to a paramedic."

9 Then it says:

10 "I also remember instructing people in the stairwell
11 to evacuate the building."

12 Dealing with the first of those points, can you
13 remember anything that would help with a description of
14 the woman, the baby and the small child whom you helped
15 out of the building?

16 A. What, description of the persons themselves? Only that
17 she was a black lady.

18 Q. She was a black lady?

19 A. I can't remember clothing or --

20 Q. Do you think it might perhaps have been a girl, three
21 years old, and a baby, five or six months old?

22 A. Yes, it could be.

23 Q. But you do remember that she and her children were
24 black?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. Then we see in your statement it says:
2 "I also remember instructing people in the stairwell
3 to evacuate the building."
4 Did you give that same advice to anybody who made it
5 as far as the central staircase?
6 A. If they were in the staircase, I would have asked them
7 to go down. As far as I can remember, whilst -- when I
8 saw people in the stairwell, I was either taking
9 equipment up or going down to get more equipment prior
10 to me becoming entry control officer.
11 Q. Did you give any advice to anyone you met in the
12 building to stay in the building or perhaps to go back
13 to their flat and wait to be rescued?
14 A. Not as far as I can remember, no.
15 Q. Did you overhear any of your colleagues giving advice to
16 any resident in the building, face to face, to go back
17 to their flat and wait to be rescued?
18 A. Not that I can remember, no.
19 Q. I think it's right there came a time when it became
20 increasingly smokey at the bridgehead?
21 A. That's correct, yeah.
22 Q. Can you give the members of the jury a flavour of what
23 was like, what the conditions were?
24 A. As the incident progressed -- the ECO should be in clean
25 air, so you do get the smell of the smoke and the smell

1 of the fire, as it -- wisps that were coming through,
2 but as we were standing in the stairwell it should be
3 clean. It got smokier and smokier. We couldn't breathe
4 properly.

5 Q. You wouldn't have been wearing breathing apparatus?

6 A. No, we didn't have any breathing gear on.

7 Q. And in terms of the crews who were putting on breathing
8 apparatus, would they have been able to put that on in
9 clean air or not?

10 A. Initially they were, but as it got compromised we had to
11 move the bridgehead down.

12 Q. When the bridgehead was moved down, did you wait at the
13 bridgehead with the entry control board until you were
14 satisfied that all crews were accounted for?

15 A. Initially, yeah.

16 Q. Do you remember how many firefighters came down from
17 above the bridgehead to it before the whole bridgehead
18 was moved down?

19 A. No, I don't, no, remember the numbers.

20 Q. Can you remember whether any of those firefighters who
21 came down to the bridgehead in that way brought any
22 residents with them as they did so?

23 A. No, I don't recall that, no. Sorry, I don't remember if
24 they brought anyone with them.

25 Q. You don't remember either way, or you don't think that

1 they did?

2 A. I don't remember that they did. I don't recall.

3 Q. You and your colleagues then made your way out of the

4 building because the bridgehead was effectively lowered

5 so that it was outside the building?

6 A. That's correct, yeah.

7 Q. And you were relieved of your role as breathing

8 apparatus entry control officer?

9 A. That's right, yes.

10 Q. In due course you were committed back into the building,

11 this time with breathing apparatus on?

12 A. That's right, yeah.

13 Q. If we could look in the advocate' bundles at page 1037

14 to try to get a time for when that might have been.

15 (Handed) I expect, Mr Farmer, that this is not

16 a document you've seen before?

17 A. No.

18 Q. It's also not a format of a document that you are

19 familiar with; is that correct?

20 A. That's correct, yes.

21 Q. Let me just explain what it is. It's a schedule that

22 summarises data that's downloaded from breathing

23 apparatus that you and your colleagues wore which

24 records the time when the key tally was pulled so as to

25 start the operation of the breathing apparatus and start

1 the time running for people like yourself in an entry
2 control function to record and keep a check of. If you
3 look in the middle of the page to the right, you see
4 your name?

5 A. Yeah.

6 Q. And if you stay in that row and look to the left, in
7 about the middle of the page, there's a column that says
8 "from", and our understanding is that the data indicates
9 that you were first committed in breathing apparatus at
10 around 17.47, the time we see in bold.

11 A. Okay, yeah.

12 Q. I think your recollection is you were committed with
13 Firefighter Badger; is that right?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Slightly further up the page -- we've heard this already
16 in evidence -- this document indicates that he was
17 indeed committed at essentially the same time as you,
18 17.47?

19 The task that you were given, according to your
20 statement, is to go to the fourth floor; is that right?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. Do you recall who gave you that task?

23 A. No. It was the officer in charge of the entry control.

24 Q. Officer in charge of entry control. Your statement on
25 page 103 says:

1 "Due to the layout, we found we could not access the
2 fourth floor as this is a floor between the maisonettes
3 that could only be accessed through a locked door
4 through the flats. We radioed the entry control point
5 and were redirected to go to the 3rd floor."

6 Can you assist the court with what impression, if
7 any, you got about whether the person you were telling
8 that information to was being told something that they
9 did know or that they didn't know?

10 A. Well, as far as I was aware, I didn't think they knew
11 that access to be the flats was on odd-numbered floors.

12 Q. So at that time, which is shortly after 17.47, your
13 impression was that the person you were speaking to at
14 entry control didn't realise that the access on the
15 central corridors was on odd-numbered floors only?

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. As I understand it, you searched the 3rd floor, knocked
18 on doors, and you took one person out on that floor; is
19 that right?

20 A. Yes, that's correct.

21 Q. Then you ran low on air and had to return to the entry
22 control point?

23 A. That's right, yeah.

24 Q. And a little later you were committed back into the
25 building again. If we look at the same schedule,

1 against your name this document suggests that you went
2 back into the building at around 19.22. Does that sound
3 about right?

4 A. It sounds about right, yeah. I didn't really have
5 a recollection of times.

6 Q. On this occasion, you were tasked to go to the 11th
7 floor and search one of the corridors?

8 A. That's right, yeah.

9 Q. What I wanted to ask you now was about whether, in the
10 course of those activities -- acting as entry control
11 officer and then subsequently going twice into the
12 building with breathing apparatus -- you learned things
13 about the building that you hadn't previously known on
14 arrival at Lakanal House that afternoon?

15 A. Only the -- whilst on one of the -- when we were tasked
16 to go to the 3rd floor, we were waiting to be committed
17 up to the 11th -- this was when the BA entry control was
18 on the 11th floor -- sorry, 3rd floor -- we did look at
19 a flat to orientate ourselves, a flat which had either
20 been left open or we gained access to. So we had a look
21 at a flat.

22 Q. Was that when you were wearing breathing apparatus for
23 the first time or the second time?

24 A. It was the first time when I went in with
25 Firefighter Badger, when we were tasked to go to the

1 fourth and went to the 3rd, and then, when the BA
2 control was moved up to the 3rd, whilst we were waiting,
3 we had a look round the flat to get another layout.

4 Q. If you look in your statement at page 105, the paragraph
5 just below the bottom holepunch says:

6 "At this time, I did not know if we had keys to the
7 doors on the intermediate (even) floors. We have
8 a bunch of keys on the appliance and I would assume that
9 one of these keys would open these doors."

10 Do you see that?

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. I just want to show you some photos to try and identify
13 which doors you might be talking about. That is a door
14 on an even-numbered floor from the central staircase
15 into a lobby area, and that is a door that leads from
16 the central lobby area I've just mentioned on to one of
17 the escape balconies. I'll show you them each again.
18 Then going back to your statement:

19 "I didn't know if we had keys to the doors on the
20 even floors. We have a bunch of keys on the appliance
21 and I presume that one of these keys would open these
22 doors."

23 Can you help the court as best you can which doors
24 you're referring to in this area?

25 A. I was referring to the ones in the lobby area, by the

1 stairs.

2 Q. So not the one in this picture?

3 A. Not this picture.

4 Q. The ones in photograph 15 here?

5 A. That's right.

6 Q. In the course of your time at the incident, which was
7 from approximately 4.25 in the afternoon until late on
8 into the evening, did you build up a mental picture of
9 where different flat numbers were within the building?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. So there would have come a time when somebody said, "We
12 need to go and check flat 87", for example, and you
13 would have had some kind of idea where that was in the
14 building; is that right?

15 A. I -- I probably would have clarified what floor it was,
16 but I would have assumed it was at the top.

17 Q. If I just show you -- that is an impression of what the
18 building looks like from the west side as you stand
19 there, not knowing what any of the flat numbers are.
20 That has the flat numbers superimposed on the previous
21 image. Can you help the court as best you can with to
22 what extent you started to build up that kind of mental
23 picture in the course of building at the fire ground on
24 3 July?

25 A. Can you repeat that? I don't understand.

1 Q. This image that's now on the screen shows where
2 different flats are in the building by number, by
3 reference to the windows that you see if you look at
4 that picture. So what I'm asking you to do, as best you
5 can, is to tell the court to what extent, by the end of
6 the fire, you had developed an understanding of where
7 flat numbers were in the building so that you could look
8 at the outside and you could say, "Well, flat 87 is
9 going to be somewhere over there and flat 30 is going to
10 be somewhere down there"?

11 A. Only -- I couldn't say I could identify where individual
12 flats would have been. Looking at this, yeah, you can,
13 but without that, I couldn't do that. I could orientate
14 from the floors, and as we saw earlier, the numbers --
15 the floor numbers and the flat numbers on the signs.
16 That's the only indication I would have had.

17 Q. And you were able to see those signs at the time?

18 A. In -- yeah, before the smoke -- stairwell got smokey,
19 yeah.

20 Q. Finally I wanted to ask you if you could assist the
21 court with what single additional thing you think would
22 have helped you most on the day of this fire to carry
23 out the firefighting and search and rescue operations
24 that were required. Looking back now, you were there
25 for many hours, doing what you could to tackle this fire

1 that we've heard about and will be hearing more about.
2 Can you think of any additional item of knowledge or
3 additional training or additional resources -- it could
4 be more firefighters or extra equipment -- that you
5 think, looking back now, would particularly have helped?

6 A. Well, having more firefighters is never a bad thing.
7 Equipment and training -- you can't know everything, but
8 having more training on the local ground, local
9 knowledge, would have helped.

10 Q. If I could just ask you, on this final topic, to have
11 a look in the advocates' bundle at page 161. You'll be
12 brought a hard copy as well. (Handed) Just take
13 a moment. Do you recognise those as notes that you made
14 on 6 July, so three days after the fire?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. They're in your handwriting?

17 A. No, they're notes that I dictated to a scribe.

18 Q. I understand. If you turn on to page 164, you see at
19 the bottom of the page number 17?

20 A. Yeah.

21 Q. It's right, isn't it, that these are answers to
22 a standard set of questions about your involvement in
23 the fire?

24 A. (The witness nodded)

25 Q. I can tell that you the question to which number 17

1 relates is:

2 "Is there anything else you wish to say about the
3 incident?"

4 Your answer therefore was:

5 "Concerned about communications difficulties."

6 Is that right?

7 A. That's right, yeah.

8 Q. Can you just explain to the members of the jury what you
9 meant by that and what point you were getting at?

10 A. Whilst I was tasked as ECO officer on the bridgehead --
11 I was communicating with the crews that were in the
12 firefighting and search and rescue -- I had problems
13 with the radios. I wasn't getting through to them,
14 I was just getting -- not even static. It was just
15 a constant beep, a constant tone.

16 Q. These are crews above you?

17 A. Crews just above, yeah. I couldn't communicate with
18 them adequately. I don't know how -- we did get through
19 to them eventually, but instantly we couldn't call them
20 up.

21 Q. So this was a problem for some of the time?

22 A. Some of the time, not throughout.

23 Q. But not all of the time?

24 A. I could understand if there was static, so just losing
25 signal, but it was a constant tone when you pressed the

1 press to talk button.

2 Q. Thank you very much. Those are my questions.

3 THE CORONER: Thank you. Mr Hendy.

4 Questions from MR HENDY

5 MR HENDY: Mr Farmer, my name's Hendy. I represent three of

6 the bereaved families. I wonder if you could look,

7 please, at witness statements, page 109. This is the

8 witness statement of David Sharpe. Am I right in

9 thinking that you, David Sharpe and Crew Manager Willett

10 were all on E371 together?

11 A. That's correct, yes.

12 Q. If you look down -- it hasn't come up yet. Page 109?

13 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Madam, Mr Hendy would like it up, but

14 it's a witness who hasn't yet given evidence.

15 MR HENDY: Yes.

16 THE CORONER: As he hasn't given evidence, are you able to

17 cover the point in a different way, Mr Hendy?

18 MR HENDY: Yes, I can.

19 THE CORONER: Thank you.

20 MR HENDY: On arrival, did you see flames and smoke clearly

21 coming out of the building?

22 A. Yes, I did.

23 Q. Mr Willett gave evidence. I read an extract from him

24 this morning and I won't ask anybody to turn it up.

25 I'll just read it again:

1 "As we approached the building from the access road,
2 there was a lot of burning debris falling from the
3 building."

4 Is that something you saw?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. Thank you very much.

7 THE CORONER: Thank you. Mr Dowden?

8 Questions from MR DOWDEN

9 MR DOWDEN: Yes, could I ask you to have a look at your
10 statement, page 102. It's just by the second holepunch.
11 It starts:

12 "Prior to arriving at the scene, I could see smoke
13 in the air. I observed people pointing up at the
14 block."

15 Do you recall that?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. When you say "people", are we talking about groups of
18 people there when you arrived?

19 A. I can't -- I can't remember if it was groups. It was
20 people in the street, members of the public pointing up.

21 Q. Thank you.

22 THE CORONER: Yes, Ms Al Tai.

23 Questions from MS AL TAI

24 MS AL TAI: Good afternoon, Mr Farmer, I act on behalf of
25 Mark Bailey, Catherine Hickman's partner. Can I ask you

1 to turn to page 105 of your statement, please. I'm
2 looking at five lines down, the sentence that begins
3 "When I took over the entry control board". I'll read
4 it aloud, or if you prefer --

5 A. No, you can read it.

6 Q. "When I took over the entry control board, I saw that
7 there were two crews of people committed, but at the
8 time I was not aware of specific flat numbers. I was
9 not given a briefing by the watch manager but the
10 firefighter gave me a briefing, in that he confirmed
11 both crews were engaged in firefighting and search and
12 rescue. I do not recall any of the briefings that were
13 given to crews as they were subsequently committed.
14 There was at least one other crew committed. During
15 this time I do not remember hearing about any flat
16 numbers where people may have been trapped. My
17 perception of the incident at this time, bearing in mind
18 that there were people around me, was of the smoke
19 conditions which became smokier and smokier."

20 It then continues on but it's not relevant to my
21 question. Can I confirm with you then at this time that
22 you didn't have any information regarding the
23 individuals who required rescuing on either the 11th
24 floor or any of the other floors?

25 A. At this time, I didn't have any information as far as

1 I can remember.

2 Q. And you didn't hear any conversations regarding any of
3 those individuals who required rescuing?

4 A. No.

5 Q. Thank you.

6 THE CORONER: Mr Matthews?

7 MR MATTHEWS: No questions, thank you.

8 THE CORONER: Mr Walsh?

9 MR WALSH: Just one.

10 THE CORONER: I'm so sorry, Mr Compton, did you have any?

11 MR COMPTON: No questions.

12 THE CORONER: Thank you.

13 Questions from MR WALSH

14 MR WALSH: From the evidence you've given this morning, it
15 would appear that there was smoke-logging in the central
16 stairwell.

17 A. That's right, yes.

18 Q. And it covered a number of floors by the sound of it?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. And at the worst point, just as you had to leave and
21 retreat, as it were, was it possible to see greater than
22 a distance of, let us say, a metre or a metre and a half
23 in front of you?

24 A. Sorry, can you repeat that?

25 Q. At the worst point, when you had to retreat, was it

1 possible to see as much as a metre or a metre and a half
2 in front of you? Could you see more, or did it vary?

3 A. From -- from where the bridgehead was, as the smoke
4 increased, visibility did decrease, but you could still
5 see probably at least a metre and a half. You just
6 couldn't breathe easily.

7 Q. You just couldn't breathe easily?

8 A. No. Obviously as you're taking in smoke it's hindering
9 your breathing, and it got worse and worse. So that's
10 why we went.

11 Q. Thank you very much.

12 THE CORONER: Members of the jury, do you have any questions
13 for Mr Farmer? Thank you very much.

14 Mr Farmer, thank you very much indeed for coming.
15 Thank you for the evidence you've given and the help
16 that you've given to us. You're welcome to stay if you
17 would like, but you're free to go if you would prefer.

18 A. Thank you very much.

19 THE CORONER: All right, it's just gone 1 o'clock. Shall we
20 have a break now and continue at 2 o'clock sharp.

21 (1.02 pm)

22 (The short adjournment)

23 (1.59 pm)

24 THE CORONER: Could we have the jury, please. So it is
25 Mr Sharpe?

1 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Mr Sharpe, yes.

2 THE CORONER: Mr Sharpe, would you like to come forward? Is
3 Mr Sharpe in court? Perhaps somebody could find him.

4 (In the presence of the Jury)

5 THE CORONER: Mr Sharpe, come forward.

6 DAVID SHARPE (sworn)

7 THE CORONER: Thank you, Mr Sharpe. Do sit down. Do help
8 yourself to a glass of water if you would like.

9 A. Thank you.

10 THE CORONER: You will see that the microphone in front of
11 you is switched on. If you would speak very close to
12 it, please, just so we could all hear easily, that would
13 be helpful. Mr Maxwell-Scott, who is standing, is going
14 to be asking some questions initially on my behalf and
15 then others will be asking questions afterwards. Thank
16 you.

17 Questions from MR MAXWELL-SCOTT

18 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Mr Sharpe, could you give the court your
19 full name, please.

20 A. David Alan Sharpe.

21 Q. I'm going to be asking you questions about your
22 knowledge of Lakanal House and your involvement in
23 fighting the fire there on 3 July 2009. Is it right
24 that at that time you had been a firefighter for
25 approximately seven years?

1 A. That is correct, yes.

2 Q. Should we assume from your uniform today that you still
3 work for the London Fire Brigade?

4 A. I do, yes.

5 Q. Unless I indicate otherwise, my questions today will be
6 directed to how things were done on or before the date
7 of the fire.

8 A. Okay.

9 Q. At that date, you were a firefighter based at Peckham
10 fire station?

11 A. I was, yes.

12 Q. We heard that there are a number of different reasons
13 why a firefighter might visit a building like Lakanal
14 House. We've heard about operational incidents, home
15 fire safety visits and familiarisation visits, also
16 sometimes called 72D visits?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. Can you do the best you can to remember for which of
19 those reasons you had previously visited Lakanal House?

20 A. I believe I'd been there for home fire safety visits,
21 definitely for incidents, and I did have quite
22 a reasonable knowledge of the building, so I don't
23 actually remember visiting -- doing the 72D, but I was
24 aware of the layout and the -- where the flats were laid
25 and the where the dry riser was, et cetera.

1 Q. So it follows from what you have said you would
2 certainly have been in communal areas in the buildings?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. And on each occasion you did a home fire safety visit,
5 you would have been in a flat?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. Can you remember as best you can how many home fire
8 safety visits?

9 A. I couldn't tell you, I'm afraid.

10 Q. More than one?

11 A. Possibly. May have been one, could have been more.

12 Q. Can you tell us as best you can when the last time was
13 you visited the building before the fire in July 2009?

14 A. I don't remember, I'm afraid.

15 Q. Do you think it's something best expressed in days or
16 weeks or months or years?

17 A. Probably months.

18 Q. I am now going to ask you a series of questions about
19 the knowledge that you had of certain features of
20 Lakanal House before you arrived there on the afternoon
21 of 3 July 2009. Firstly, I think you were aware that
22 there was a single central staircase?

23 A. That is correct, yes.

24 Q. Did you know that there were signs within the building
25 giving information about flat numbers?

1 A. I was aware that there would be a sign above the lift
2 obviously for getting to the relevant floors regarding
3 different incidents, yes.

4 Q. You're talking about the sign that you can see in that
5 picture, which, to help you in close-up, is shown much
6 more clearly there?

7 A. That is correct, yes.

8 Q. So you were aware of that sign before you arrived on the
9 afternoon of 3 July?

10 A. I'm aware that there would have been a sign there
11 indicating which floor -- which flats were on which
12 floors, yes.

13 Q. Just looking at that sign on its own, you can see from
14 it that there are a total of 98 flats?

15 A. Correct.

16 Q. That there are 14 flats per pair of floors?

17 A. Yes. Looking at that I could, yes. I wouldn't have
18 known that beforehand.

19 Q. And that there are presumably either 13 or 14 floors to
20 the building?

21 A. Correct, yes.

22 Q. Again, sticking with what you knew before you arrived on
23 3 July 2009, did you know that the flats were what's
24 sometimes called maisonettes, that they were on two
25 floors with an internal staircase?

1 A. I was aware of that, yes.

2 Q. Were you aware that they were all essentially identical
3 in layout?

4 A. No, I wouldn't assume they were identical. Looking at
5 the flats, you could maybe assume that but I wouldn't
6 have done, no.

7 Q. So just breaking that down, you didn't know that?

8 A. No.

9 Q. That would have been a reasonable assumption in your
10 mind, would it, or would you not say?

11 A. I don't like to assume things, no, but if you're looking
12 at the flats -- the way it's identically laid out, then,
13 yes, it may have been a reasonable assumption, I would
14 say.

15 Q. And that assumption might be encouraged by the fact that
16 there seem to be 14 flats per pair of floors from
17 looking at that sign we were just seeing?

18 A. Not necessarily. There are different flats on our
19 station's ground that have different layouts within the
20 building, so not necessarily.

21 Q. As far as you can remember, do you think that before
22 3 July 2009 you had walked up the internal staircase
23 within a flat to the upper level?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. Having done so, you would have found that the flat at

1 that level stretched the whole width of the building?

2 A. I was not aware of that.

3 Q. Let me show you some photographs to assist. That's

4 a photograph, as it happens, taken in flat 24 on the

5 3rd floor from the top of the steps?

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. So that's a lounge, and you can see there's a door from

8 it leading somewhere.

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. This is also on the upper level of the same flat, and

11 that is a kitchen.

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. And again, a door leading from it.

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Does that help refresh your memory as to whether you

16 knew before you arrived on 3 July that the flats at the

17 upper level had access to both sides of the building?

18 A. It refreshes my memory of the layout of the flats in

19 general, but it wouldn't have occurred to me that they

20 actually spanned the whole width of the building.

21 Q. When you went to a flat there for the purposes of a home

22 fire safety visit, can you recall whether you discussed

23 with the residents the different escape routes from the

24 flat?

25 A. Not on an individual basis. Part of the home fire

1 safety visit would be talking about an escape route and
2 an escape plan, and we would have obviously mentioned
3 that you had doors to get to balconies et cetera
4 outside, yes.

5 Q. So just following it through, that's the kitchen, now
6 with the balcony door open, and that's a view after one
7 has been out of the balcony door?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. That's a view along the balcony and that's a close-up
10 view of the door at the end of the balcony. As best you
11 can remember, do you think that before the fire
12 in July 2009 you had stepped out onto one of those
13 balconies?

14 A. No.

15 Q. Were you aware that they existed?

16 A. I was aware there were balconies there, yes.

17 Q. Were you aware that they were escape routes, that that
18 was their purpose?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. Were you aware that unless residents had piled lots of
21 items on the balconies at floor level, they were
22 balconies that one could walk up and down?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. Were you aware where that door in photograph 37 led to?

25 A. Not having seen it from the outside, I just would have

1 assumed -- naturally assumed it led to the central
2 staircase, but I haven't actually been through one,
3 so...

4 Q. I appreciate you hadn't been on one of the balconies, so
5 therefore you hadn't been through that door.

6 A. No.

7 Q. But you knew that the balcony was an escape route?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. And you assumed that that door led by way of escape to
10 the central staircase?

11 A. Yes, which would be a protected central staircase, yes.

12 Q. If I can just ask you to keep your voice up a little
13 bit. Perhaps pull the microphone closer to you. That
14 may assist.

15 A. Better?

16 Q. That is better. It does help to keep your mouth near
17 the microphone?

18 A. Okay.

19 Q. I think you were just saying that you were aware that
20 the central staircase was a protected staircase?

21 A. It should have been a protected staircase, yes. As in
22 the case of most flats, the staircase and stairwell
23 should be a protected area.

24 Q. Can you just explain to the jury what that means?

25 A. It means if a fire breaks out in a block of flats

1 et cetera, there should be a protective stairwell for
2 egress and also for firefighters to actually make
3 entrance to the block of flats to gain access to where
4 the fire may be. So it should be a smoke free zone,
5 effectively.

6 Q. This is a photograph taken from outside the building,
7 from the corner of Dalwood Street and Sedgmoor Place.
8 On it, you can make out there are balconies on alternate
9 floors. Can you see?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. A close-up of that image from the same place looks like
12 this, and you can see there the white door at the end of
13 the balcony.

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. That's the door that you've told us you assumed before
16 3 July 2009 would lead to the central staircase?

17 A. That is, yes.

18 Q. And a safe means of getting out of the building?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. I'm going to turn now and ask you about what you did on
21 3 July itself.

22 A. Okay.

23 Q. At the end of that, I'll want to recap with you whether
24 there were features of the building that you didn't know
25 or understand before you arrived on 3 July but which you

1 learnt about whilst you were there.

2 A. Okay.

3 Q. If that is the case, by all means feel free to say so at

4 a suitable point as we go through what you did on the

5 day.

6 A. Okay.

7 Q. Is it right that on the day of the fire you were driving

8 appliance E371?

9 A. That is correct, yes.

10 Q. Was that the pump or the pump ladder?

11 A. That is the pump ladder.

12 Q. And that you travelled in convoy with E372?

13 A. That is correct, yes.

14 Q. I think it's right that you were the person who booked

15 status 3, which means that you showed that you'd arrived

16 at the scene?

17 A. I'm not sure if it was myself or the officer in charge

18 at the time, but we would have booked status 3 on

19 arrival, yes.

20 Q. You made a witness statement on 4 August 2009 about this

21 incident. Was your memory of the fire better on that

22 date than it is today?

23 A. It would have been -- it would be, yes.

24 Q. Would it help you to have a look at that statement?

25 A. It would, please, yes.

1 Q. That starts at page 108 of the statements bundle.
2 (Handed) Do you recognise that as your statement dated
3 4 August 2009?
4 A. I do, yes.
5 Q. About three quarters of the way down the page, it says:
6 "I was asked by Barry Willett, officer in charge..."
7 Do you see that?
8 A. Yes.
9 Q. "... to book status 3, which means to show that we have
10 arrived at the scene."
11 A. Yes.
12 Q. Just explain what booking status 3 means and how you do
13 it.
14 A. On each appliance at the time there was a -- what we
15 call a button box, and there was various numbers on the
16 button box for which state the appliance was in. So
17 status 1 would be at station, ready and available,
18 status 2 would be en route to an incident, status 3
19 would be arrival at an incident. So status 3 would mean
20 that we'd actually arrived at the incident at the time,
21 and we'd press the button to say we'd actually arrived
22 and we were there.
23 Q. And we know -- and it's in your statement as well --
24 that the system recorded that button as having been
25 pressed at 16.23.57.

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. Now, as it happens the button was pressed on the other
3 Peckham appliance approximately three minutes later,
4 although we've heard from you and other witnesses that
5 both essentially arrived at the same time.

6 A. Yes, we did.

7 Q. Can you help us, if you can, with whether you pressed
8 the button when you arrived at the scene and parked, or
9 whether you pressed it before you arrived because you
10 could see the building and thought, "Well, I'll just
11 press it now", or whether you pressed it after you
12 arrived?

13 A. No, if I was ordered to press it, I would have had to be
14 in a stationary position because I would have been
15 driving at the time, so I would have had to pull up at
16 the incident. I would then have pressed the button.

17 Q. So we can assume, therefore, that you would have arrived
18 and were stationary by 16.23.57?

19 A. That is correct, yes.

20 Q. I'm just going to get you a photograph to try and assist
21 you with where you parked. I think that's a photograph
22 that you refer to in your statement on page 109, and you
23 say of it:

24 "The furthest machine away in the photo is my
25 machine."

1 A. That is correct.

2 Q. Is that where you initially parked it?

3 A. That is, yes.

4 Q. Was there a particular reason for stopping there?

5 A. Having known -- or visited the building previously,
6 I knew where the dry riser was, and obviously we
7 wouldn't park underneath an incident for falling debris,
8 so obviously we made a decision to go past the -- the
9 central staircase to beyond, to basically the south side
10 of the building to set up from there to get into
11 a hydrant and get into the dry riser.

12 Q. So is the effect of what you're saying that it wasn't
13 exactly where you would have preferred to park but you
14 had to move a little bit along because of falling
15 debris?

16 A. Well, each incident is different. In this occasion, the
17 debris would have been just short of the central
18 staircase that was falling down. Normally you wouldn't
19 normally drive underneath a fire in those situations
20 anyway, so you may have actually parked short of it, but
21 knowing that the dry riser was the other side, I made
22 the decision -- or Barry made the decision to make me
23 park further across.

24 Q. Then you were instructed by Mr Willett to get into the
25 hydrant and charge the dry riser?

1 A. That is correct.

2 Q. That involves pumping water to a pressure of 10-bar?

3 A. That is correct.

4 Q. Can you just explain to the members of the jury what
5 that means and what it involves?

6 A. Basically, we need -- to get water to the dry riser, to
7 the upper floors, we would need to get water from
8 a dry riser via a twin set of hoses to the appliance
9 first, to enable us to pump -- actually pump the water,
10 via another set of twin hoses, to the dry riser inlets
11 and then charge the actual system which -- the dry riser
12 system is a set of pipework inside the building which
13 has no water in it, which we then would charge with
14 water which would give access to firefighting crews on
15 whichever floor it may be to carry out firefighting.

16 Q. According to your statement you were just beginning that
17 procedure when Barry Willett, who was the incident
18 commander, said to you: "Make pumps four"?

19 A. That is correct.

20 Q. Which meant that he was asking you to send that as
21 a radio message?

22 A. A priority message, yes.

23 Q. And you did that?

24 A. I did.

25 Q. You told Mr Willett that you had done that and then

1 continued with what you had been doing, which was
2 setting into the hydrant?

3 A. That is correct.

4 Q. Mr Crowley and Mr Farmer assisted?

5 A. That is correct, yes.

6 Q. Once you'd done that, you informed the officer in charge
7 of the bridgehead that the water was ready to be
8 charged?

9 A. That's correct, yes.

10 Q. Do you recall who that was?

11 A. I don't, I'm afraid, no.

12 Q. Do you recall whether he was already at the bridgehead
13 when you told him that?

14 A. I had no way of knowing that. I contacted him via
15 radio. I didn't actually know if he was at the
16 bridgehead at the time or on his way to it.

17 Q. But is it right that he did then ask you to charge to
18 10-bar?

19 A. He did, yes.

20 Q. Your statement says that there were messages coming from
21 Firefighter Badger via the radio asking for more
22 equipment to be brought up. Do you recall that?

23 A. Not off of the top of my head, no.

24 Q. But do you think that's right?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. You then helped Mike -- is that Mike Farmer?

2 A. It is Mike Farmer, yes.

3 Q. -- and Luke -- is that Luke Crowley?

4 A. It is, yes.

5 Q. -- to get more equipment into the lift?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. But you stayed near your appliance to keep a check on

8 water pressure and water supply?

9 A. That's correct, yes.

10 Q. Do you have some system of dials or something similar on

11 the appliance to tell you what the water pressure is?

12 A. Yes, there is, yeah.

13 Q. Is it right there came a time when you saw the fire

14 spread to lower floors in the building?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. Up until that point, had you been always by or close to

17 your fire engine?

18 A. I had, yes.

19 Q. I'm going to show you a couple of photographs to help

20 you recall what you're talking about in terms of fires

21 lower in the building. There will be two photos:

22 firstly this one timed at 16.48, and then this one

23 approximately a minute later?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. Is that what you recalled in terms of fire starting on

1 the 7th and 5th floors?

2 A. That is correct, yes.

3 Q. In your statement, you say that it was a matter of
4 30 seconds between the two flats burning?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. And that is consistent with what we see in these two
7 photographs, the first one a fire on the 5th floor but
8 not obviously one on the 7th floor -- maybe if one zooms
9 in -- and then, a minute later, there is now smoke that
10 can be seen coming from the 7th floor. So you have two
11 fires --

12 THE CORONER: Mr Maxwell-Scott, when you're looking at your
13 machine we can't hear you so well because the microphone
14 is away from you.

15 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Do you agree that here one can now see
16 fires on both the 5th and 7th floors?

17 A. I do, yes.

18 Q. What were your thoughts at the time about how these
19 fires had started and what was on fire?

20 A. I think I mentioned in my statement we weren't quite
21 aware -- because there was actually some bird-netting on
22 the outside of the buildings, and we weren't actually
23 sure if it was just some debris caught within that
24 netting that was alight or if it was actually the
25 netting in the windows of the flats as the windows were

1 open. That was my initial thoughts.

2 Q. Your statement says:

3 "First of all we considered that debris could have
4 fallen and it was the nets that were smoking and not
5 actually the flats that were on fire."

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. Who is the "we"?

8 A. I believe it was myself and Crew Manager Willett at the
9 time.

10 Q. The final paragraph of your statement includes the
11 sentence:

12 "This is the first time I've ever seen a fire going
13 downwards."
14 On page 112.

15 A. That's correct, yes.

16 Q. When you saw this, to what extent were you surprised to
17 see fires starting on the 5th and 7th floors?

18 A. I'm not sure "surprised" would be the correct word.
19 Just reacted to it, really, you know. It didn't take --
20 well, it wasn't a shock but then it wasn't something I'd
21 seen before, so ...

22 Q. When you say that it wasn't a shock, is that because
23 netting might well catch fire if burning debris lands on
24 it and stuck in it?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. Then you reacted to this by getting on the radio to
2 Firefighter Badger, who was at the bridgehead, and
3 telling him that there were now flats below the
4 bridgehead on fire; is that right?

5 A. That is correct, yes.

6 Q. Is it right that you and Barry Willett then laid out
7 a fire hose and tried to direct water on the fires?

8 A. That is correct.

9 Q. What we see in this photograph at 16.49 is a jet of
10 water being directed at the fifth floor?

11 A. That is correct.

12 Q. You were involved in doing that?

13 A. I was pumping, yes.

14 Q. Your statement says:

15 "It became quite gusty and the hose was only just
16 reaching the fifth floor in between gusts of wind."

17 A. That is correct.

18 Q. Does it follow from that that it wasn't able to
19 effectively attack the fire on the 7th floor?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. As a result, were you asked to increase the pressure of
22 the water?

23 A. I -- yes, I don't remember who made the decision, but we
24 decided to try and increase the pressure to get a better
25 throw of water onto the -- to see if we could reach the

1 7th floor, yeah.

2 Q. You can't just do that without checking with others that

3 it's a safe and appropriate thing to do?

4 A. That's correct.

5 Q. And so you checked via the radio with the bridgehead and

6 got the all clear to raise the pressure to 13 bars?

7 A. That is correct, yes.

8 Q. Did that make much difference?

9 A. It didn't I'm afraid, no.

10 Q. So we're back in the same scenario of having some effect

11 on the fire on the 5th floor, but not really being able

12 to reach the fire on the 7th floor?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. Your statement says the next major thing you remember is

15 standing by your machine and the first crews that had

16 gone into the fire wearing breathing apparatus coming

17 back out?

18 A. That's correct.

19 Q. You say they were worn out?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. Just give the jury a flavour of how they looked and why

22 it is you thought that they were worn out?

23 A. They were very hot and sweaty. They needed to take

24 tunics off, cool down. Mike briefly spoke and said

25 there was very hard work involved and they needed to

1 rehydrate and get some water on board.

2 Q. Was that Mr Fournier and Mr Simons?

3 A. It was.

4 Q. They are your colleagues, aren't they?

5 A. They are, yes.

6 Q. So you knew it was them?

7 A. I did.

8 Q. And then is it right that an officer came and asked who

9 hadn't yet worn breathing apparatus, and you said you

10 hadn't?

11 A. That is correct, yes.

12 Q. Who was it who came over and spoke to you?

13 A. I do not know, I'm afraid.

14 Q. It wasn't anyone from Peckham?

15 A. No.

16 Q. It wasn't anyone you recognised on the day?

17 A. No.

18 Q. So you handed over your duties to Firefighter Simons and

19 you put on breathing apparatus?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. And then you went to the area outside the building where

22 people were gathering in breathing apparatus to be sent

23 into the building?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. Is it right that that was round the other side of the

1 building?

2 A. That is correct, yes.

3 Q. So they were on the right side to enter via the central
4 staircase?

5 A. When I say the other side of the building, I mean the
6 opposite side of the building to where my machine was
7 parked, yeah.

8 Q. In due course you entered the building as part of
9 a three-man crew with firefighters Badger and Farmer?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. As best you can, how long do you think that you waited
12 in the area you have described to be committed into the
13 building?

14 A. I couldn't tell you, I'm afraid.

15 Q. Any idea?

16 A. As with all incidents, time seems to -- you know, it
17 goes out the window. It could have been ten minutes,
18 could have been five minutes. I really couldn't tell
19 you, I'm afraid.

20 Q. Let me try and help you with how long it might have
21 been. I'm going to go to page 1037 in the advocates'
22 bundles. (Handed)

23 The first thing I want to say is that this is
24 probably not a document that you've seen before?

25 A. No.

1 Q. It's probably not a format of document that you
2 recognise?

3 A. No.

4 Q. What it is is a schedule which summarises data
5 downloaded from the bodyguard system on breathing
6 apparatus.

7 A. Okay.

8 Q. Do you see in the top row, towards the right, under
9 "Wearer name", "D Sharpe"?

10 A. I do.

11 Q. Then if you look towards the middle of that row, you see
12 a column that says "From"?

13 A. I do.

14 Q. So our understanding is that the correct time that we
15 should be using is the one in bold, which is 17.47, and
16 if you look further down, you see that Mr Badger also
17 has a time of 17.47, as does Mr Farmer?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. So that's consistent with the three of you being
20 committed at the same time?

21 A. That is, yes.

22 Q. Mr Simons is also on this page at the very bottom, and
23 if you see where he is from and to, what this tells us,
24 if it's correct, is that he was committed at 16.33, and
25 he wore breathing apparatus, breathing air, from 16.33

1 until 16.48. Do you see that?

2 A. I do, yes.

3 Q. So if that's right, that would suggest that at around

4 16.48 he ceased relying on air and would have withdrawn

5 from the bridgehead and --

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. -- come downstairs and you would have seen him worn out

8 outside the building?

9 A. Yes, there may have been a time that's in between me

10 seeing him and him coming out, obviously, because he

11 would have had to debrief and ...

12 Q. Of course, and that's not something you can comment on,

13 but looking at this, it looks as if you were committed

14 almost exactly an hour after Mr Simons ceased relying on

15 his breathing apparatus?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. Do you think that on reflection you might have been

18 waiting to be detailed for something in the region of

19 45 minutes to an hour?

20 A. No.

21 Q. Can you assist the court as best you can with what you

22 think you were doing between 16.48 and 17.47?

23 A. Well, I would have continued pumping operations. Again,

24 the best of my recollection is that the officer in

25 charge came over and asked: "Has anyone not worn a BA?"

1 I really couldn't tell you at what timeframe that was.
2 At that point, I would have put my BA system on and gone
3 round to the waiting area to be detailed.

4 Q. When you were in that waiting area, presumably you were
5 inside a cordon which meant that members of the public
6 could not approach you; is that right?

7 A. I don't -- I don't remember there being a cordon, but
8 yeah, there was an area where we were sitting down as
9 a group of firefighters waiting to be deployed, yeah.

10 Q. So the only access you would have had to members of the
11 public at the time would have been residents leaving the
12 building by the central staircase?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. Who would have walked past you?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. When the time came for you to be detailed, you were
17 given a task by Mr Payton; is that right?

18 A. Payton.

19 Q. Payton. The task that he gave you was to carry out
20 search and rescue on the 4th floor?

21 A. Correct.

22 Q. You knew that there was no central corridor on the 4th
23 floor?

24 A. Yeah, there was no access to flats from the even floors,
25 yes.

1 Q. And that in order to get at the flats that lay on the
2 3rd and fourth floors, you would have to do so via the
3 3rd floor?

4 A. That's correct, yes.

5 Q. And you told Mr Payton that?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. As best you can, what impression did you get from him as
8 to whether you were telling him something that he
9 effectively already knew and it had just slipped his
10 mind or whether you were telling him something that he
11 genuinely did not know up until then?

12 A. I don't remember, I'm afraid. I don't remember his
13 reaction at the time.

14 Q. In the time that you were waiting to be detailed in the
15 area that we discussed, putting to one side the question
16 of how long you were there for, did anyone come up to
17 you at any point and ask you about what you knew about
18 the layout of the building?

19 A. Not that I remember.

20 Q. Having received your tasking, you went to the 3rd
21 floor --

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. -- for the reasons that we've discussed, and you checked
24 it. There were no signs of fire, smoke was very light;
25 is that right?

1 A. If any -- if at all, yes.

2 Q. You informed the entry control point and then, having
3 discussed it with them, you made your way to the fifth
4 floor?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. And had a further discussion with them and went up to
7 the 7th floor?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. And when you got to the 7th floor, you made your way to
10 a flat where there had been a fire?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. That would, therefore, be the flat I'm pointing to with
13 my arrow?

14 A. I believe so, yes.

15 Q. Flat 53. I don't know if you know --

16 A. I don't remember the flat number, I'm afraid.

17 Q. You found that there was a jet already laid out that had
18 been used to put out the fire but small pockets of fire
19 appeared to have reignited?

20 A. That's correct, yes.

21 Q. So you put them out?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. You then had reached the end of your time with breathing
24 apparatus and you exited the building?

25 A. Yes, that's correct.

1 Q. Then, later on, you went back into the building, again
2 wearing breathing apparatus?

3 A. I did, yes.

4 Q. As part of a four-man crew which was sent to the 11th
5 floor?

6 A. That's correct, yes.

7 Q. If we look on this schedule again on page 1037, you're
8 on the top row and it suggests that you were committed
9 for the second time at 19.09.

10 A. It does, yes.

11 Q. Does that sound about right? There's no reason to
12 think --

13 A. No, no reason to think I wasn't.

14 Q. You thought that you were going to find a raging fire,
15 but in fact you found a scene of devastation caused by
16 fire?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. You carried out search and rescue tasks?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. And around the time that it came for you to turn round,
21 you yourself got caught up in some wires that were
22 hanging down?

23 A. That's correct, yes.

24 Q. Is it right that that is potentially a very dangerous
25 situation?

1 A. It is, yes.

2 Q. One of your crew members helped to free you?

3 A. That is correct.

4 Q. Then you made your way back out of the building?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. In terms of residents that you spoke to on the day, your
7 statement says the only member of the public you spoke
8 to was a man on your arrival who said his daughter was
9 on the 1st floor?

10 A. That's correct, yes.

11 Q. And you told him that she, ie his daughter, should wait
12 and that "we would get there"?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. Just coming back to my original topic about knowledge of
15 the layout of the building, I wanted to ask you what
16 extra understanding you gained of the layout of the
17 building in the course of what you did on the day that
18 you didn't have when you arrived there that afternoon.

19 A. None.

20 Q. Did you, by the end of the day, appreciate that each
21 flat on its upper level stretched the width of the
22 building and therefore had windows on either side?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. Did you start to build up a picture of where different
25 flats were in the building by reference to flat numbers?

1 A. No.

2 Q. That's what the building looks like from the west side
3 if you're standing at ground level and you don't know
4 what window represents what flat. That's correct, isn't
5 it?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. If I show you now essentially the same image with flat
8 numbers superimposed on it. Can you help the court as
9 to what extent, by the end of the day, you had started
10 to build up a mental picture like that?

11 A. Not much of one. The flats that were involved in the
12 fire, I would have been obviously aware where they were.
13 I would remember the numbers for that and could probably
14 point them out on the photo, but as for other numbers,
15 then none.

16 Q. When you say "the flats that were involved", you think
17 you learned where flat 79 was?

18 A. 65 initially.

19 Q. Yes.

20 A. I didn't obviously find out until later what the number
21 was on the 11th floor which would have been 79, but
22 I knew by the end of the incident.

23 Q. Do you think you learnt that when you were inside the
24 building wearing breathing apparatus or before that?

25 A. 65 initially, because we were called to the initial

1 fire. As for 79, it would have been later on, after I'd
2 been wearing breathing apparatus, yes.

3 Q. And 81 you would have found out at the same time as 79,
4 perhaps later?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. Not before?

7 A. No.

8 Q. You were there for many hours. What I'd like you to do
9 finally in my questions is to look back and tell us, as
10 best you can, if you can think of any particular single
11 additional thing that you think would have helped you
12 most on the day of the fire to carry out the tasks of
13 firefighting or search and rescue.

14 A. Initial manpower would have been helpful, more helpful.
15 Obviously, there was a lot of firefighters used during
16 the incident but the initial attendance would have
17 been -- if we'd had, you know, a couple of more
18 machines, maybe. It's speculation, but yeah, initial
19 manpower would have been helpful, and better
20 communications probably.

21 Q. Thank you very much. Those are my questions, but there
22 will be questions from others as well.

23 A. Thank you.

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Questions from MR HENDY

MR DOWDEN: Mr Sharpe, my name's Hendy. I represent three of the bereaved families. Can you confirm, like others on your appliance, that you saw burning debris falling down as you approached the block of flats?

A. I can, yes.

Q. You say in your statement that you knew the fire was on the 9th floor and "on arrival I'd seen flames and smoke clearly coming out of the building"; is that right?

A. That is correct, yes.

Q. In your witness statement, you said that you sent the message: "Make pumps four." You say:

"I sent the priority message to control which they confirmed via the mainframe radio.

I know we're going to have other evidence about that, but what do you mean by the mainframe radio?"

A. The mainframe radio would be the direct link between the fire appliances and control. The radios -- the radios that are in the appliances.

Q. The radios on the appliances, not the radios on the individual firefighter?

A. No.

Q. Right. Is that a term of art amongst firefighters? When you say "mainframe radio", you mean the radio on the appliance, not the radio that's carried on the --

1 A. "Mainframe radio" could be a term I just used here.
2 Generally, it would just be get on the radio to control,
3 which would mean obviously get on the radio on the
4 appliance to control to order more machines or whatever
5 you need to do.

6 Q. Later in your statement -- perhaps you ought to have it
7 in front of you. It's page 109 of the witness
8 statements. You're explaining how you helped your
9 colleagues to get more equipment into the lift,
10 a 45-millimetre hose et cetera. Your role is to stay
11 a reasonable distance from the machine and keep a check
12 on the water pressure and the water supply. Then, about
13 halfway down the page, you said:

14 "After assisting Mike and Luke, I went to the rear
15 of the machine and continued my duties."

16 By "machine", you mean the appliance, of course?

17 A. I do. I mean my pump ladder, yes.

18 Q. Am I right in saying at the rear of the appliance you
19 wouldn't hear the mainframe radio?

20 A. Not at the time, no. Not at the time, no.

21 Q. You mean subsequently there's a new development whereby
22 firefighters would hear a radio?

23 A. Yes. We know have a speaker on the back of the machine.

24 Q. But they didn't have them in July 2009?

25 A. No.

1 Q. Thank you. You describe how Mr Willett and yourself
2 laid out a 17-millimetre jet to try and cover the fires
3 on the 5th and 7th floor and we saw a photograph of the
4 water being applied. Can you confirm that at that stage
5 there was no aerial ladder platform applying water to
6 the ladders on the 5th and 7th floor?

7 A. Not on my side of the building, no.

8 Q. Did you ever see an aerial ladder pump applying --

9 A. Not until a bit later, twenty minutes or when I went
10 round the other side of the building.

11 Q. Did you ever see the aerial ladder pump that did apply
12 water to the 7th and 5th floors on the west side of the
13 building, or is that something you don't recall?

14 A. I don't recall.

15 Q. You explained that at the time you thought the fires on
16 the 5th and 7th floor might have been caused by falling
17 burning debris catching on the netting, but with
18 hindsight -- let me just ask you to look at this
19 photograph before I ask you the question. Could you
20 look at jury bundle, divider 12, page 23. (Handed)
21 There should be a photograph there, at page 12, page 23.

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. There we can see obviously, on the top of the building,
24 the fires on the 9th, 10th and 11th floor, and lower
25 down we can see the fire on the 7th floor and the 5th

1 floor; is that right?

2 A. That's correct, yes.

3 Q. Those fires on the 7th and 5th floor are at the bedroom
4 level, each one being below the respective balcony, yes?

5 A. That's correct, yes.

6 Q. The netting, of course -- the anti-pigeon netting was
7 put along the balconies, wasn't it?

8 A. I don't recall where the netting was.

9 Q. We'll leave that there then. In answer to a question
10 from Mr Maxwell-Scott, you said you'd not seen a fire
11 going downwards. Have you seen the panels on a high
12 rise block ever burn before?

13 A. No.

14 Q. Thank you very much.

15 Questions from MR DOWDEN

16 MR DOWDEN: My name's Dowden. I ask questions on behalf of
17 Mr Francisquini. On arrival, you told us of two things:
18 the instructions which Mr Willett gave to you and being
19 approached by a member of the public. Can you give us
20 an idea as to the sequence of events?

21 A. Sorry, can you just repeat that, sorry?

22 Q. Towards the end of your evidence, you told us that on
23 arrival at Lakanal, you were approached by a member of
24 the public who gave you some information. When you were
25 starting your evidence, you told us that Mr Willett

1 directed you to do various things. At what stage did
2 you come into contact with the member of the public?

3 A. From memory, it would have been after we'd already set
4 the hydrants up and charged the high riser, so after the
5 initial sort of burst of getting equipment ready and
6 charging the dry riser.

7 Q. Can you give us any idea of the amount of time that it
8 would have taken you to have done that?

9 A. To set the equipment up?

10 Q. Yes.

11 A. Two to three minutes maybe to get to the dry riser and
12 get the dry riser charged and obviously getting
13 equipment to the lift as well. So maybe five minutes in
14 total.

15 Q. On arrival and speaking to Mr Willett, how long did it
16 take him to brief you as to what your role and what
17 others were supposed to be doing?

18 A. He would have asked me basically as we were getting off
19 the machine.

20 Q. All right. Can you recall the description of the male
21 who approached you?

22 A. I don't, I'm afraid, no.

23 Q. You've noted the first floor in your statement. Is it
24 possible that he mentioned another floor, perhaps the
25 11th floor?

1 A. No, he definitely said to me 1st floor.

2 Q. Did he give you a flat number?

3 A. He didn't, no.

4 Q. Did he give you any other information?

5 A. No, just that his daughter was in a flat on the 1st

6 floor.

7 Q. How long after your arrival were you aware of colleagues

8 of yours going into the building?

9 A. As I was downstairs, the bridgehead would have been

10 upstairs. I would have had no knowledge at exactly what

11 time they would have gone in. It would have been

12 a matter of minutes. The dry riser was charged

13 immediately, the bridgehead was ready to go, but

14 I couldn't give you an exact time of what time they

15 entered the flat or were sent from entry control to the

16 flat.

17 Q. Were you aware of any individuals or groups of members

18 of the public standing around, looking up at the

19 building when you arrived?

20 A. I may have -- I've lost it from memory, there would have

21 been -- initially, there's normally people pointing up

22 to the building. I don't recall it myself.

23 Q. Do you recall anybody approaching them and asking for

24 information about the layouts of the particular flats?

25 A. No.

1 Q. Thank you.

2 Questions from MS AL TAI

3 MS AL TAI: Good afternoon, Mr Sharpe. I act on behalf of
4 Mark Bailey, Catherine Hickman's partner. Just
5 following from the questions of my learned friend
6 Mr Dowden, could you please tell us -- it's at page 112
7 of your statement. Again, it's going back to the
8 incident where a male approached you and told you about
9 his daughter on the 1st floor. You informed him that
10 "she should wait and we would get there". Upon telling
11 him that, did you ask about the condition of the flat
12 that she was in?

13 A. No.

14 Q. So you don't know whether it was smoke-logged or if
15 there was fire or anything of that nature?

16 A. No.

17 Q. Thank you. In respect of some questions you were asked
18 earlier by Mr Maxwell-Scott, you informed us that better
19 communication would have assisted. We've heard evidence
20 from a few of your colleagues that at the time there was
21 a failure with the radio. Did you encounter any
22 problems of that nature?

23 A. Not on my personal hand held radio, no.

24 Q. Just briefly, when you say "better communication", can
25 you explain to us what you mean by that?

1 A. Well, it's with hindsight. Obviously the speaker at the
2 back of the machine has now been put on the appliances,
3 so when you're standing -- if a driver or pump
4 operator's standing at the back of the machine, you'll
5 be able to hear any messages trying to come through from
6 the control, which will enable you to get onto the radio
7 and take information from them.

8 Q. Thank you very much.

9 THE CORONER: So you're talking about the radio
10 communication which goes to the machine rather than the
11 personal ones?

12 A. Yes.

13 THE CORONER: Thank you. Yes, Mr Matthews.

14 Questions from MR MATTHEWS

15 MR MATTHEWS: Mr Sharpe, will you forgive me, because right
16 at the beginning of your evidence, I didn't quite catch
17 your answer. It was when you were being asked about 72D
18 and familiarisation visits. I think you said that you
19 didn't need to go on a 72D visit because you were
20 familiar with the building for other reasons?

21 A. No, that's not what I said.

22 Q. I'm very sorry then. Can I ask you to tell us what you
23 did say?

24 A. Yes, sorry, I -- I had an idea of the layout of the
25 buildings from previous visits to the buildings, either

1 via incidents -- smoke alarms. I don't remember
2 actually doing the 72D there, but I obviously had gained
3 information on where the dry riser was in relation to
4 the building. The only reason I would have done that is
5 obviously doing a 72D visit where we would check various
6 bits of the building, dry riser's working, all the
7 inlets and outlets et cetera.

8 Q. Okay. So is this right: you think you would have done
9 a 72D visit because you were aware of where the
10 dry riser was?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Is that it? Can I ask you this: were records ever made
13 of 72D visits?

14 A. They should have been made by officers, yes.

15 Q. Would that include learning about the layout of the
16 building?

17 A. At a 72D visit, we would go along, we would get an
18 idea roughly the length of the corridors, et cetera, how
19 many lengths of hose it may take to get to the end flat,
20 along those lines. I don't recall the recording process
21 at that time, because I haven't been involved in that
22 side of it, so ...

23 Q. No, fair enough. But your understanding is that kind of
24 information would be recorded somewhere?

25 A. Again, I can only say -- as firefighters, we would

1 obviously try to get to know our ground and the major
2 bits of -- or buildings on that ground. I can only say
3 that we would discuss what sort of measures we would
4 initially take to get to a high rise incident, roughly
5 how many lengths of hose we might need to get
6 to a certain flat, or the end flats, maybe, in this
7 situation. As for the recording, it would be down to
8 the officers.

9 Q. Can I ask that you help us with something that we have
10 in our jury bundle behind tab 15. The pages are at the
11 bottom centre. This is a training package. Page 1137
12 is the start of it.

13 A. Okay.

14 Q. It's entitled "High rise buildings and dealing with high
15 rise fires" and it's dated November 2008. Do you
16 remember sitting through that presentation?

17 A. Not off the top of my head, no.

18 Q. Can I ask you just to look through then to page 1148.

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. That's a slide headed "Pre-planning".

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. We can see the first bit says:

23 "Under section 72D of the Fire and Rescue Services
24 Act 2004, regular familiarisation visits and
25 pre-planning should be carried out. Pre-planning is

1 essential when dealing with a fire in a high rise
2 premises and operational information, gathering and
3 recording should be carried out in accordance with new
4 policy 521, information gathering."

5 Can you help us: what do you understand by
6 "pre-planning"?

7 A. As I mentioned, basically the -- on arrival tactics,
8 where to park appliances, where dry risers would be,
9 where hydrants would be located to get water to the
10 incident, where stairwells were, et cetera.

11 Q. Would it include the number of appliances and the type
12 of appliances turning up?

13 A. Not on my understanding. That would be something
14 decided by the brigade as a whole, not by each
15 individual station.

16 Q. So that wouldn't be part of pre-planning?

17 A. Under -- yes, I presume it would, but not something that
18 I would deal with as a firefighter. It would be down to
19 officers to pre-determine what they would maybe need at
20 the time.

21 Q. Okay. Can you look at 1149. This is the last thing
22 I think I'll ask you. This is another slide headed
23 "Pre-planning". It is talking about pre-planning
24 commercial institutional and industrial, and we can see
25 there's a second bullet point there that's, as I say,

1 talking about pre-planning. It says:

2 "The impact this has on pre-determined attendance
3 for such buildings should be considered and station
4 managers should make arrangements for appropriate
5 attendances if this has not already been done."

6 Can you help us with that at all then? Is it
7 station managers who have the power to determine what
8 appliances should turn up?

9 A. I'm not fully aware of the process. I believe that if
10 there was a particular risk for a certain building, they
11 can then put a case forward to maybe change the
12 pre-arranged determined attendance(?) or a request to
13 change the pre-determined attendance on a certain
14 building.

15 Q. Was that part of the purpose of 72D visits, as you
16 understood them?

17 A. Quite possibly.

18 Q. Thank you very much.

19 THE CORONER: Mr Compton.

20 Questions from MR COMPTON

21 MR COMPTON: I have just one question, please.

22 THE CORONER: Sorry, could you go closer to a microphone,
23 please.

24 MR COMPTON: I'm so sorry. The familiarisation visits that
25 you carried out under section 72D -- would they generate

1 a firefighting plan for a building?

2 A. Generally -- I'm not aware of blocks of flats generally
3 having a firefighting plan. Sorry, can I just ask: do
4 you mean like a firefighters' box that would have
5 information for firefighters when they turn up or...?

6 Q. No. Can I deal with that --

7 A. Yes, sorry.

8 Q. The familiarisation visit that you went on, where you
9 look at hydrants and all the sort of information you
10 need, would that generate or be recorded on some form of
11 firefighting plan?

12 A. Yeah, as far as I'm aware -- as I say, I don't really
13 deal with the office side of things but as far as I'm
14 aware, it would be recorded on a visit -- there's a file
15 for each premises on the building that we do 72D visits
16 on. They would then note in there various bits of
17 information.

18 Q. Thank you. What would you expect to see in the
19 firefighting box within the building? What information
20 would you expect to see there?

21 A. Just general high rise procedures, what equipment we'd
22 need to take up to, you know, the relevant floors,
23 et cetera, what type of equipment, how much.

24 Q. Thank you very much.

25 THE CORONER: Yes, thank you. Mr Walsh.

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Questions from MR WALSH

MR WALSH: Mr Sharpe, you've said that as a firefighter there are certain responsibilities that you have and there are certain responsibilities that crew and station managers have and so on?

A. Yes.

Q. And incorporated within those, is there the decision whether or not to include information in a premises information folder? The responsibility of the senior personnel?

A. Yes, I would say so.

Q. You've said that you're not involved in that decision-making process?

A. No. We may point out facts that we've seen on the visits, and then they would then determine from there what would happen.

Q. Yes. Just taking up the theme of the questions you've just been asked, of course when you're dealing with a high rise fire, there's a high rise procedure?

A. Well, yeah, there's a note regarding high rise procedure. There's a general sort of basic amount of equipment we would take up to any procedure.

Q. Sure. So when you attend a high rise block of flats like Lakanal, there is a procedure, which includes making sure that you, for example, identify and connect

1 to the rising main?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. The dry riser?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. And that you identify the hydrant?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. That you take up certain equipment to what is described
8 as the bridgehead?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. We need not go into what the bridgehead is because we've
11 been through that before. So that's the basic high rise
12 procedure?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. Insofar as this fire is concerned, what you said in
15 answer to questions from both Mr Maxwell-Scott and
16 Mr Hendy is that you had never seen, as we've heard
17 before, a fire going downwards?

18 A. Not in my time, no.

19 Q. In other words, the catching of fire in flats below the
20 originating fire?

21 A. Correct.

22 Q. In answer to a question from Mr Hendy, you said you had
23 never seen the panels on the exterior of a building
24 burn. We won't go through that. What I do want to ask
25 you is about the impact that that had on the necessity

1 of firefighters then to walk up the stairs later on.

2 The bridgehead had to be moved?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. And why was that, very quickly?

5 A. Because the procedure states that the bridgehead should

6 be located two floors below the lowest fire as such, or

7 where the fire is situated.

8 Q. Yes, at least. So you're coming down the building.

9 Now, at the beginning of your involvement with this, you

10 had had some involvement in using the lift?

11 A. Only putting equipment into it, yes.

12 Q. Yes, and so we've heard that the lift was used, but

13 I just want to make sure that there is clarity about the

14 use or non-use of the lift.

15 The result of the moving of the bridgehead

16 downstairs and eventually outside meant that people in

17 BA had to be committed from the ground floor or, for

18 example, from the 3rd floor. Could they have taken the

19 lift?

20 A. I can't answer that. I don't know if the lift was still

21 being used at the time or for what reason it was being

22 used. We have a firefighter's control on the lift that

23 we can use to take control of the lifts.

24 Q. Right. If there was no firefighter's lift to take

25 control of -- we need not go into what reason why there

1 wasn't -- would it have been appropriate for
2 a firefighter in BA to go into a lift past three floors
3 of fires to an upper floor in a lift?

4 A. No.

5 Q. Do you know the reason for that, or should we ask
6 someone later?

7 A. I think you should ask someone later, yeah.

8 Q. Very well. There came a point, after you had been
9 committed to the 7th floor -- as we've heard, you went
10 up there in BA. A point came when it was, as you
11 described in your statement, "turn around time"?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. What is that?

14 A. It's the amount of air left in your BA set that will get
15 you safely back to the entry control point, depending on
16 what you're actually doing.

17 Q. You came downstairs, you tell us in your statement.

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. And you went and waited in what was known as the
20 collection area. I won't take you to the statement
21 unless you want me to.

22 A. No.

23 Q. But do you recall that?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. What was the collection area?

1 A. It was for personnel that had already worn once in the
2 incident.

3 Q. For persons who had already ...?

4 A. For persons that had already worn a BA set once in the
5 incident.

6 Q. Why, because those persons might be needed to wear BA
7 again and be recommitted to the building?

8 A. That's correct, yes.

9 Q. What about people who might have worn it twice?

10 A. Our procedures state that you can't wear it more than
11 once -- sorry, more than twice at an incident.

12 Q. Okay. The second time you were committed, you were
13 committed eventually from the 3rd floor, as we've heard
14 about, some time after 7 o'clock, and you went up, and
15 in your statement at least you indicate that you had to
16 stop for a breather, as you describe it, on the 9th
17 floor.

18 A. I believe it was the 10th floor.

19 Q. I beg your pardon?

20 A. I believe it was the 10th floor.

21 Q. You believe it was the 10th floor. That's where you had
22 your breather?

23 A. Yeah, the floor below where we were meant to go to.

24 Q. Did you actually need a breather at that time?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. Help the jury with what the impact was on you of going
2 up the second time and walking to the 10th floor.

3 A. Basically we were detailed to firefight and search and
4 rescue, so in that instance you don't want to go
5 straight into a hot area where you're actually panting
6 out of breath. Obviously, walking up eight flights of
7 stairs with a BA set is reasonably hard work, so --
8 I think it was actually Crew Manager Willett who decided
9 to say, "Look, you know, we'll just have a 15/30 second
10 breather, and then we'll go to the 11th floor."

11 Q. Okay. Now, having gone to the 11th floor, as you have
12 described -- and Mr Maxwell-Scott has pointed out that
13 you said that you expected a substantial fire, and in
14 fact you saw that there was devastation where a fire had
15 been?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. You carried out certain searches and there came a point
18 where it was decided it was necessary to leave.

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. Before you did so -- if you want me to take you to the
21 statement, I will, but it may not be necessary -- you
22 noticed that there was a fire above a false ceiling --
23 between a false ceiling and a concrete area above that.
24 Do you remember that?

25 A. I do. That was on -- actually on initial entry to the

1 11th floor we noticed that, not when we were coming out.

2 Q. Forgive me, thank you. That was on initial entry. So

3 take this slowly if you would. You're arriving on the

4 11th floor. Was it in the lift lobby area?

5 A. Yes, we came up the communal staircase into the lift

6 lobby area.

7 Q. And you looked above. What did you see?

8 A. I can remember seeing -- basically, as we've entered the

9 lift lobby area and we looked to the right, there was

10 just nothing really. Just a load of burnt out flats,

11 effectively.

12 Q. All down the corridor?

13 A. Most of the way, yeah, or at least half the way.

14 Q. Pause there. Can you remember seeing anything coming

15 from the ceiling, or anything --

16 A. I don't remember myself. I don't know if I was the

17 first person through the door.

18 Q. All right, fair enough. Carry on. So that's what you

19 saw.

20 A. Yeah, so obviously we wouldn't go past the point of fire

21 in case it escalates, so we obviously decided to --

22 there was another crew there, the EDDBA crew, that were

23 actually on the right-hand side of where the devastated

24 flats were, and they asked us if we could go to the left

25 hand side of the building, effectively. So we obviously

1 put the fire out above our heads first and -- it wasn't
2 a raging inferno. There were pockets -- again, pockets
3 of fire that were in the ceiling.

4 Q. Right, so you looked up and you saw a fire above the
5 ceiling?

6 A. Well, in, effectively, a roof void, where there was
7 a false ceiling and then the concrete above it.

8 Q. Right. That was in not only the lobby area but also in
9 a communal part of the premises. We asked you about
10 what you thought was unusual about the fire before. Is
11 that what you would have expected to see in a high rise
12 block in a communal area?

13 A. I find that difficult to comment on. I don't know if
14 the usual practice is to have false ceilings in high
15 rise corridors. I'm not sure, to be honest with you.

16 Q. But were you surprised to see a fire there?

17 A. Not initially, because we were detailed to -- we were
18 initially detailed for firefighting and search and
19 rescue.

20 Q. All right, but you continued to search on the 11th
21 floor. Then there did come a point when it was turn
22 around time again.

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. You describe in your statement about being caught by
25 wires coming down from the ceiling?

1 A. That's correct.

2 Q. Just to get a little bit more about that, you said that
3 it was around your chin and under your helmet?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. And you couldn't see to get it off?

6 A. No.

7 Q. What were the visibility conditions?

8 A. Can I -- when I say I couldn't see, I couldn't actually
9 see the wires myself to untangle myself.

10 Q. Right. This was after your turn around time?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Who helped you?

13 A. I don't remember who was in my crew. There was a crew
14 of four. I'm not exactly sure who it was who untangled
15 me.

16 Q. Was it necessary for someone to untangle you?

17 A. Yes. I couldn't actually do it myself.

18 Q. And that was some form of wiring coming down from the
19 ceiling, was it?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. All right. Thank you very much indeed.

22 THE CORONER: Thank you. Members of the jury, do you have
23 any questions for this witness? Thank you very much.

24 Mr Sharpe, thank you very much for coming and thank
25 you very much for the help that you have given to us.

1 You're free to go if you would like, but you're welcome
2 to stay if you would wish to do so.

3 A. Thank you.

4 (The witness withdrew)

5 THE CORONER: Yes. Could we have our next witness, please?

6 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: The next witness is Police Constable
7 Esangbedo. His witness statement is at page 91.

8 MICHAEL ESANGBEDO (sworn)

9 THE CORONER: Thank you, do sit down, and do help yourself
10 to a glass of water. If you could make sure that you
11 speak quite close to the microphone, please, because
12 your voice is quite soft and we are amplifying the
13 sound. If you could speak slowly and clearly because
14 the transcribers are preparing a transcription.

15 Mr Maxwell-Scott, who's there, is going to be asking
16 questions initially on my behalf and then there will be
17 some questions possibly from others. If you look that
18 way when you're answering the questions, can you make
19 sure the microphone is close.

20 MR HENDY: Madam, may I just make a logistical suggestion?
21 I know it's very difficult for the witness, particularly
22 when Mr Matthews over there is asking questions, but if
23 the answers are directed to you and the jury, then the
24 microphone will pick up the answers a little bit better.
25 We're having a little difficulty here.

1 THE CORONER: If you could try and do that.

2 A. All right.

3 Questions from MR MAXWELL-SCOTT

4 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Don't think you have to look at me at
5 all. If you look at the members of the jury and the
6 coroner, that will work better. Can you give the court
7 your full name, please?

8 A. Detective Constable Michael Esangbedo.

9 Q. I'm going to be asking you questions about what you did
10 around Sceaux Gardens and Lakanal House on the afternoon
11 of 3 July 2009. Is it right that on that day you were
12 on duty in a police vehicle with your colleague
13 PC Brewer?

14 A. That's correct.

15 Q. There came a time when you had a message to attend
16 Lakanal House because there was a fire?

17 A. That's correct.

18 Q. Did you then drive to the scene?

19 A. Yes, we did.

20 Q. When you got there, were there fire engines already
21 there?

22 A. That's correct.

23 Q. Are you able to recall how many fire engines were there
24 when you arrived?

25 A. There were just several. I can't recollect exact

1 numbers.

2 Q. Were there any ambulance service vehicles there were you
3 arrived there?

4 A. That's correct as well.

5 Q. I think you then set about establishing what we would
6 call a cordon using some tape from your vehicle; is that
7 right?

8 A. That's right.

9 Q. There's a photograph up on screen which I've put up,
10 hopefully just to help illustrate the point. So the
11 blue and white tape that says "Police line -- do not
12 cross", is that what you would have got from your
13 vehicle?

14 A. That's correct.

15 Q. Is it right that you cordoned off Sedgmoor Place?

16 A. That's correct, I did.

17 Q. I'll show you an overhead view to help you get your
18 bearings. Just take a moment to have a look at that.
19 The building in the middle of the page which I'm marking
20 with my white arrow now is Lakanal House, and then you
21 can see Sedgmoor Place, which I'm marking with the white
22 arrow, and the corner that it makes with Dalwood Street.
23 Does that help you to recall the area?

24 A. Yes, it does.

25 Q. So you cordoned off Sedgmoor Place by putting some

1 police tape. Do you recall where you did that? Was
2 that up at the corner with Dalwood Street?

3 A. That's correct.

4 Q. And then you made your way to Lakanal House and told
5 people who had congregated there to move away because it
6 was dangerous for them to stand there?

7 A. That's correct.

8 Q. Did there come a time when you saw the fire spreading to
9 other floors in the building?

10 A. That's correct.

11 Q. Did there come a time when you were approached by two
12 men, one of whom pointed at a floor in the building and
13 said that his family was in there?

14 A. That's correct.

15 Q. Are you able to assist with what floor they were
16 pointing at or how high up the building they were
17 pointing?

18 A. It was the top floor, I believe the 9th or the 8th
19 floor.

20 Q. Towards the top?

21 A. Yes, that's correct.

22 Q. Did you then raise this with a fire commander?

23 A. That's correct.

24 Q. He then spoke to the man and said that firefighters were
25 working to put out the fire?

1 A. That's correct.

2 Q. Was a message sent by radio to firefighters within the
3 building?

4 A. That's correct.

5 Q. A little while later, did the same fire commander come
6 and tell you that he wanted the cordon increased in
7 scope, so that now Havil Street was shut off?

8 A. That's correct.

9 Q. Did you and other police officers then move the crowd so
10 that the cordon was where the fire commander wanted it?

11 A. That's correct.

12 Q. Is it right that at approximately 6.00 in the evening
13 you received a radio message from one of your police
14 colleagues saying that you and PC Brewer were going to
15 be replaced and relieved by other officers?

16 A. That's correct.

17 Q. And you then left the scene?

18 A. That's correct.

19 Q. Thank you very much. Those are my questions, but others
20 may have some.

21 THE CORONER: Thank you. Mr Hendy?

22 MR HENDY: No questions, madam.

23 THE CORONER: Thank you. Mr Dowden?

24 MR DOWDEN: No thank you.

25 THE CORONER: Ms Al Tai?

1 MS AL TAI: No, thank you, madam.

2 THE CORONER: Who's next? Is it Mr Matthews?

3 MR MATTHEWS: No questions.

4 THE CORONER: Sorry, Mr Walsh next, I think, is it? No.

5 Would anyone like to ask any questions of the

6 Detective Constable? Thank you. Members of the jury?

7 Questions from the Coroner

8 THE CORONER: Can I just ask you: in answer to

9 Mr Maxwell-Scott's question, you said that you agreed

10 that a message was sent by radio?

11 A. That's correct.

12 THE CORONER: How do you know?

13 A. I was right there.

14 THE CORONER: You were standing by the fire commander?

15 A. That's correct.

16 THE CORONER: I see. Thank you very much. PC Esangbedo,

17 thank you very much for coming and for the help that

18 you've given. You're free to go if you would like, but

19 you're welcome it stay if you wish.

20 A. Thank you.

21 (The witness withdrew)

22 THE CORONER: Yes.

23 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Madam, the final witness today is Wayne

24 Tebboth.

25 THE CORONER: Yes, is he in court, please? Would you like

1 to come forward.

2 WAYNE TEBBOTH (sworn)

3 THE CORONER: Thank you. Do sit down. Do help yourself to
4 a glass of water. You've probably heard from our
5 discussion with the previous witness, if you could make
6 sure that you speak into the microphone and direct your
7 answers across the room to the jury, that would be very
8 helpful.

9 A. No problem.

10 Questions from MR MAXWELL-SCOTT

11 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Can you give the court your full name
12 please?

13 A. Yeah, it's PC Wayne Tebboth.

14 Q. I'm going to be asking you about what you did in
15 Sceaux Gardens and the area of Lakanal House on the
16 afternoon of 3 July 2009. Is it right that you were
17 called to the scene to assist with crowd control at
18 about 5 in the afternoon?

19 A. Yes, that's correct.

20 Q. You were with six other colleagues in a larger police
21 vehicle?

22 A. That's correct, yes.

23 Q. When you got to the scene, is it right that you met up
24 with Inspector Pete Turner?

25 A. That's correct.

1 Q. And from the Metropolitan Police Service's position, was
2 he the officer in charge?

3 A. At that time, yes.

4 Q. What briefing did he give you?

5 A. He basically told us that he needed the crowds moving
6 back away from the building.

7 Q. I'll put up on screen a photograph to help you get your
8 bearings. You've seen this perhaps from the back of
9 court, but the building in the middle I'm indicating
10 with a white arrow is Lakanal House. According to your
11 statement, you assisted in moving the crowd back along
12 Dalwood Street to Southampton Way. I don't think
13 Southampton Way is marked on this map. Can you help us
14 which direction it's in?

15 A. It's basically the eastward direction. It's on the east
16 end of Dalwood Street.

17 Q. So it's off the page to the east?

18 A. That's correct, yeah.

19 Q. Is it right that the cordon that you put in was about
20 30 metres from the junction with Redbridge Gardens?

21 A. That's right, yes.

22 Q. The red circle is on the corner of Dalwood Street and
23 Redbridge Gardens, so the cordon that you put in was
24 within about 30 metres of there; is that right?

25 A. That's right, yes.

1 Q. You were in a position to view the east side of the
2 building but not the west side of the building?

3 A. That's correct.

4 Q. Did it become clear that there were people in the crowd
5 who were very distressed because people were trapped
6 within the building?

7 A. Yes, that's right.

8 Q. Did there come a time when you saw a family on a balcony
9 waving for help?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Can you assist the court with how high up the building
12 they appeared to be?

13 A. It's approximately on the 7th floor.

14 Q. What I'm going to do is to show you a couple of images
15 to help you with this point. So that's what the
16 building looks like from the outside. This is the west
17 side but it looks essentially the same from the east
18 side, except the central staircase is not, in fact,
19 exactly central, so it will look more towards one end,
20 but you can see there the shape of the building and the
21 fact that you've got balconies on alternate floors.
22 I think your statement says the family was on about the
23 7th floor, but help us with how easy or difficult it is
24 when you're at ground level to count off the floors?

25 A. Yeah, it would have been very difficult to actually

1 pinpoint the exact floor that the family were on.

2 Q. It's no criticism of you whatsoever, but as it happens,

3 if they were on a balcony as you say, they would, by

4 definition, have to have been on an even-numbered floor?

5 A. Yes, looking at that.

6 Q. This is a photograph of two people on a balcony, and

7 I'll show you another photograph, taken some 18 minutes

8 later, of the same people. I don't know if that helps

9 to jog your memory at all. Those people were on the

10 12th floor balcony on the east side in both of those

11 photos.

12 A. Okay.

13 Q. Are you able to say whether those are the people that

14 you saw waving for help or not?

15 A. I can't say for sure, but I think so.

16 Q. Is it right that whilst you were at the cordon in the

17 area of Dalwood Street and Redbridge Gardens, a man came

18 up to you and said he was concerned for his family and

19 believed that they were trapped on the 11th floor in

20 flat 82?

21 A. That's correct, yes.

22 Q. In your statement you describe him as an IC3 male. Just

23 for the benefit of the jury, can you explain what that

24 means?

25 A. That would be an Afro-Caribbean black male.

1 Q. Thank you. You said you didn't have details of what was
2 happening in the building but you would keep him
3 informed as you got any details?

4 A. That's correct, yes.

5 Q. Is it right that you called up control room and passed
6 on that information?

7 A. That's right, yeah.

8 Q. Were you then joined a little while later by another
9 man, who said that his family were trapped in Flat 81?

10 A. That's correct, yes.

11 Q. In your statement you describe him as an IC2 male.
12 Again, can you help the jury with what that means?

13 A. That's like a white European male, a dark-skinned white
14 person, perhaps even a mixed race person.

15 Q. Did he tell you that he'd been in contact with his wife
16 inside the building, that she was in a bathroom, there
17 were other adults and children there, and that people
18 were having trouble breathing?

19 A. That's correct, yeah.

20 Q. Did there come a time when these two men who were with
21 you by the cordon said they could no longer make contact
22 with their wives in the building?

23 A. That's correct, yes.

24 Q. Did you pass that information on straight away?

25 A. Yes, I believe so.

1 THE CORONER: You say you passed it on to the control room.
2 Can you tell me about the control room. Which control
3 room are you talking about?
4 A. That would be the police control room via my personal
5 radio.
6 THE CORONER: Right.
7 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Were steps also taken to pass that
8 information on to the London Fire Brigade?
9 A. That's correct. One of my colleagues went to pass that
10 information on.
11 Q. I think there came a time when you were aware that the
12 family you'd previously seen stranded on the balcony had
13 been rescued. Would it help to look at the statement
14 that you made at the time?
15 A. Yeah, I think it was because a cheer went up at the
16 time.
17 Q. So that was how you knew that something positive had
18 happened?
19 A. Yes, that's correct.
20 Q. Did you then work out that the cheer was because people
21 who had been very visible on the balcony had been
22 rescued?
23 A. That's correct.
24 Q. After that, did you then move from where you were with
25 the family members of those who were trapped in flats 81

1 and 82 to the corner of Dalwood Street and Havil Street?

2 A. Yes, I did.

3 Q. If you look on the map, that will refresh your memory of

4 where that is. So you walked the length of

5 Dalwood Street down to the corner I'm pointing at with

6 my white arrow now?

7 A. That's correct, yes.

8 Q. And that will have given you your first view, is that

9 right, of the west side of the building?

10 A. That's correct.

11 Q. That would have made you realise that the fire damage

12 was significantly greater on the west side than the east

13 side?

14 A. Yes, that's right.

15 Q. Did a conversation then take place with a senior member,

16 as you understood it, from the London Fire Brigade and

17 the family members who had accompanied you to this new

18 location?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. What did this senior fireman say to the families?

21 A. Just going by my notes, it was that there was nothing

22 further that he could tell them at that time but he

23 would inform me or them directly if he found anything

24 else out.

25 Q. Did this senior person get firefighters with him to take

1 some details?

2 A. Yes, that's correct.

3 Q. A little later on, did you see casualties being brought
4 out of the building and members of the emergency
5 services trying to perform CPR on them?

6 A. Yes, that's correct.

7 Q. I know that you remained at the scene after that for
8 several hours and subsequently went to St Thomas'
9 hospital. I won't ask you any more about that but
10 others may. Those are my questions. Thank you.

11 Questions from MR HENDY

12 MR HENDY: Thank you, madam. Officer, my name's Hendy. I'm
13 representing three of the bereaved families. There's
14 just one matter I wanted to ask you about: could you
15 look at page 86 of your witness statement. If you look
16 at the top of the page, four lines down, it says:

17 " ... while the male was joined by an IC2 male and I
18 spoke with this male. He explained to me that his
19 family were also trapped in the building in Flat 81."

20 The IC2 male we think is Mr Rafael Cervi, who's
21 Brazilian in origin. The jury have seen him. Bearing
22 that in mind, just run down to the last eight lines.
23 There's a line that begins with the words "ambulance
24 service". Do you have that line?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. Let's read on together:

2 "At this point the IC2 male had now been joined by
3 some more members of his family, also concerned, and
4 again I asked them all to remain together and keep in
5 contact with me and I'd give them any information as
6 soon as I was given it. I attempted to keep all the
7 members of the two families together and calm. I was
8 then joined by PC Nash, who informed me that the
9 Fire Brigade were continuing their search and were now
10 inside and clearing flat 80. I informed the two
11 families of this information and reassured them that the
12 Fire Brigade would be making their way into flat 81 as
13 soon as they possibly could."

14 I just want to pause there. Obviously you were --
15 and all my clients would wish me to say -- doing your
16 best to reassure the people that were there, Mr Udoaka,
17 Mr Cervi and others, but that information that the
18 brigade would be making their way into flat 81 as soon
19 as they possibly could, is that something that you
20 surmised or something that you had clear information
21 about?

22 A. I wouldn't have had clear information on it. It would
23 have been just reassurance to the family, just trying to
24 just help them out, keep them calm and just trying to
25 let them know that things were being done at the time to

1 try and get there.

2 Q. Right. Mr Udoaka, I should have said, is the young man
3 who's sitting here. Do you recognise him?

4 A. (The witness nodded)

5 Q. You do. Thank you very much.

6 Questions from MR DOWDEN

7 MR DOWDEN: My name's Dowden. I ask questions on behalf of
8 Mr Francisquini. Could I ask you to turn to page 90 of
9 your statement. You went to St Thomas' Hospital?

10 A. That's correct, yes.

11 Q. You were told that Mr Francisquini would be attending
12 the hospital and in fact he did, and at 22.55 hours he
13 -- "he" was Dayana's father, also present was his niece
14 Marcia and they formally identified the deceased as
15 Dayana Francisquini, date of birth of 14/12/1982.

16 A. That's correct.

17 Q. Yes, thank you.

18 THE CORONER: Thank you. Yes, Ms Al Tai.

19 Questions from MS AL TAI

20 MS AL TAI: Mr Tebboth, I act on behalf of Mark Bailey,
21 Catherine Hickman's father. As you've already given
22 evidence in respect of, two gentlemen approached you, as
23 we've heard, an IC2 and an IC3 male. Later on, you were
24 also approached by a gentleman you described as an IC1
25 male, and he informed you that a friend of his was in

1 Flat 79; is that correct?

2 A. That's correct, yes.

3 Q. Did you pass that information on?

4 A. I can't recall, unless I went through my notes.

5 Q. If I could take you, please, to page 87 of your
6 statement. I believe this is the fourth line down,
7 where you state that you "continued to reassure them" --
8 "them" I understand to mean the families -- "that I
9 would be their point of contact and that I would inform
10 them the second I had any information."

11 So it was reassurance?

12 A. That's correct, yes.

13 Q. Thank you.

14 Questions from MR WALSH

15 MR WALSH: Officer, I ask questions for the Fire Brigade.

16 Just one question. You've told us that there came
17 a point when a family that you'd mentioned earlier on
18 the balcony were rescued and you knew that this was
19 happening because there was a cheer from the crowd.

20 A. That's correct, yes.

21 Q. Did you see it yourself? Did you see how many
22 firefighters were on the balcony rescuing the family?

23 A. I can't recall. I remember seeing one of the cranes
24 going up the side of the building, but other than that
25 I can't recall actually seeing the rescue, as it was --

1 Q. Take place. I see. All right, thank you very much.

2 THE CORONER: Members of the jury, do you have any questions
3 for this police constable?

4 THE FOREMAN OF THE JURY: No, thank you.

5 Questions from the Coroner

6 THE CORONER: You've already helped us with the way that you
7 passed information to police control. Was there any
8 further information back to you, and if so, how did that
9 happen?

10 A. The information would have come back to me either via my
11 colleague, PC Nash, or it would have been just through
12 my personal radio.

13 THE CORONER: Where would it have come from on your personal
14 radio?

15 A. Just the -- either control room or sergeants who were
16 more centrally-based dealing with the London
17 Fire Brigade and the ambulance service at the time.

18 THE CORONER: Sorry, just take that step by step. So coming
19 into your radio you would have communication from the
20 police control centre?

21 A. That's correct, yes.

22 THE CORONER: And then from anybody else?

23 A. Possibly from sergeants or even the inspector in charge,
24 who would just ask us to either do anything or just
25 inform us what was going on.

1 THE CORONER: But all essentially police control or other
2 police officers?
3 A. That's correct, yes.
4 THE CORONER: Not any of the other emergency services?
5 A. No.
6 THE CORONER: I see. Thank you very much.
7 Yes, thank you very much. Thank you for coming and
8 thank you very much for the help that you've given.
9 Thank you.
10 Does that complete our evidence for the day?
11 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Yes, madam, that completes all the
12 witnesses listed to give evidence today.
13 THE CORONER: Thank you very much. Could we just have
14 a quick look at the timetable for tomorrow.
15 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Tomorrow we have firefighters Fournier
16 and Simons, both from Peckham fire station, who we will
17 hear were the first firefighters to be committed. We
18 have listed a resident, Louise Daisey, and I've asked
19 Mr Clark to try and get two out of the following four
20 residents also to come to court, and they are: Kelvin
21 Udi, Robert Kayode, Norman Ebiowei and Georgia Thomas.
22 THE CORONER: Thank you very much.
23 Members of the jury, thank you very much for coming
24 today and for listening patiently. You're free to go
25 now. Please be back tomorrow morning for a prompt start

1 at 10 o'clock, and please remember the detailed warning
2 I gave you a week ago as to not talking to anyone at all
3 about the case and not conducting any private research
4 of your own. All right? I look forward to seeing you
5 tomorrow morning. Thank you.

6 (In the absence of the Jury)

7 THE CORONER: Yes, thank you. Are there any matters that
8 anybody would like to raise before we finish this
9 evening? All right. In terms of the logistics for the
10 reporting back on the discussions that we're going to
11 have now regarding the jurors questions, is that
12 something that it will be possible to circulate by email
13 overnight or first thing tomorrow?

14 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: We'll see how far we get. I think
15 ideally, yes.

16 THE CORONER: All right. If we need a discussion about it,
17 I don't want to start that discussion at 10 o'clock
18 because I'd really like to be able to start the
19 evidence, so if it looks as if we need submissions on it
20 or any points that need decision, then we might have to
21 start a few minutes early in order to deal with that.

22 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Yes.

23 THE CORONER: All right? Thank you very much.

24 (3.49 pm)

25 (The Court adjourned until 10 o'clock the following day)

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