(10.00 am) (Proceedings delayed)

(10.05 am)

THE CORONER: Thank you, do sit down. Yes, could we invite
the jury in, please.

Mr Freeman, while you're waiting do help yourself to
a glass of water, or perhaps you've already done so.

A. Thank you, madam.

THE CORONER: And do keep your voice up so we can hear. If
you want to move the microphone closer to you. Thank
you.

(In the presence of the Jury)

MARTIN FREEMAN (continued)

Questions by MR MAXWELL-SCOTT (continued)

THE CORONER: Good morning, members of the jury. Yes,
continuing with the evidence of Mr Freeman, please.

Thank you.

MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Good morning, Mr Freeman.

A. Good morning, sir.

Q. The point we had reached was that we had established
that the instruction to make pumps 12 and aerials two
was given by you at a time when you were the incident
commander.

A. That's correct.
Q. The message to control sending the instruction "make pumps 12, aerials two" was sent, we know, at 17.04.
A. Yes, sir.

Q. What I wanted to ask you about next was the briefing that you received from Station Manager Cartwright, which I think you were given on the west side of the building, on the green.
A. That's correct.

Q. What did he tell you?
A. Station Manager Cartwright informed me that there was a fire on a number of floors within the building which appeared to be spreading, that firefighting operations were being undertaken from the exterior of the building in an attempt to control the fire from spreading on the outside of the building, and that Station Manager Foster had taken up position on the other side of the building to initiate a bridgehead. He informed me that the bridgehead had become untenable on the upper floors of the building due to the fact that smoke-logging had occurred and that Station Manager Foster was in the process of reestablishing the bridgehead and committing crews for firefighting operations on the upper floors of the building.

Q. Was Watch Manager Howling around at the time of this?
A. I believe he was, yes.
Q. Do you recall if he contributed to the briefing?
A. During -- during my initial handover, Station Manager Howling was discussing operational priorities with Station Manager Cartwright, and I listened to some of that conversation.

Q. Does it follow from that that Watch Manager Howling was available to contribute to the discussion between you and Mr Cartwright and to answer any questions that you might have had?
A. There were still a number of issues going on around and people were talking to Watch Manager Howling, trying to get information across to him, so as you can imagine, it was very busy and I tried to gain as much information as possible from Station Manager Cartwright as I could.

Q. Just have a look at what you said about this briefing in your first witness statement, which is at page 313 of the statements bundle. The third paragraph says you saw Station Manager Cartwright and asked him for a briefing:

"He informed me that firefighters had entered the building to extinguish a fire on the 9th floor, a bridgehead had been set up on the 7th floor and breathing apparatus crews had been committed to the incident for firefighting search and rescue duties."

You were informed the fire had fallen from the 9th floor and started fires on what appeared to be the 5th
and 7th floors. The next paragraph reads:

"Smoke had been reported throughout the stairwell from the fourth floor upwards, and the bridgehead had moved to the ground floor."

Is that what you were told?

A. Yes, that's correct.

Q. Then it says:

"I was also informed that approximately nine firefighters in breathing apparatus had been committed to the internal firefighting operations."

It wasn't clear to me whether that was a statement that there were still nine firefighters committed in the building or that in total, from the moment when the first crew was committed, a total of nine firefighters had been committed. Do you see the difference?

A. Yes, I do, sir.

Q. What is it meant to say?

A. It was my understanding that since the incident began nine firefighters had been committed in breathing apparatus. Station Manager Cartwright, being on the west side of the building and not being in control of breathing apparatus operations, would not be aware of whether those firefighters were still in the building or not.

Q. So it was not a statement that there were, at that
moment in time, nine firefighters still committed in the
building?
A. No, it was not.
Q. At that time, as part of that briefing, were you told
anything about how many firefighters were still
committed in the building?
A. I wasn't.
Q. Was there any discussion about whether any people were
trapped within the building?
A. It was my understanding that people were trapped inside
the building at that time.
Q. How many people did you think were trapped?
A. An unknown number.
Q. And on which floors?
A. My understanding was that there were people on all
floors above the 5th floor who weren't able to exit the
building.
Q. As we heard in some of the evidence yesterday, the
concept of people being trapped can cover a range of
scenarios. At one end of the scale it could be people
who are perfectly safe in their flats but if they open
the front door it's a heavily smoke-logged corridor and
they therefore decide to stay in their flats. At the
other end of the scale, you have people who are in very
grave danger from fire and smoke inhalation. What was
your understanding, firstly from the briefing, about whether any of the people whom you thought were trapped were in grave danger?

A. It was my understanding from obviously looking at the building and seeing the effect of the fire on the building that there would be large numbers of people who would be at risk of losing their life in that incident.

Q. And that was your own initial visual impression?

A. It was.

Q. Were you told anything on this topic one way or the other by Station Manager Cartwright, or was your view simply formed on the basis of what you could see for yourself?

A. No, that information was a view that I took for myself.

Q. If you take up the sequence of events, so the jury bundle, tab 12, at page 18. (Handed) We have there a photo taken at 16.51. The next, as it were, wide-angle photo in the sequence of events is at 17.02, which is at page 21. That photo is taken about two minutes before the "make pumps 12, aerials two" message was sent over the radio. Is that a useful photo, for discussion purposes, of what you could see when you were getting briefed by Station Manager Cartwright?

A. I believe at the time of this photograph I'd already moved to the other side of the building. I do not
recall seeing that fire development on that side of the building.

Q. Let's work from the photo at 16.51 in that case, which will be slightly before your briefing with Station Manager Cartwright. Did you have any discussion with him about whether it was believed that anybody was occupying firstly the flat on the 11th floor, which is the highest flat at which fire can be seen? Was that something that you would have discussed when you were standing looking at the building with him?

A. We didn't discuss that at that point, no.

Q. Did your discussion extend to looking at specific windows and saying, "Do we know if there's anybody in there or not?"

A. Not that I recall. My view would have been that the building had a large number of occupants and they could have been on any floors in any flats and we needed to establish that with an internal search of the building.

Q. Did you ask him any questions about what he knew about the layout of the building generally?

A. It was clear there was a block of flats and at that time that was sufficient information for me to form an initial operation plan. I didn't believe that he had any prior knowledge of the building and would be able to give me any information.
Q. Did you involve Watch Manager Howling, to see whether he had built up any knowledge of the layout of the building that might be useful?
A. Not that I recall.

Q. If I just take you to a couple of points you made in your second witness statement about this briefing at page 322 of the statements bundle. In the first answer that’s carried over from the previous page, where you were asked a general question -- "Describe your arrival and approach to Station Manager Cartwright and the scene at the time" -- at the end of your answer you said:

"At this stage I cannot recall if any flat numbers were mentioned. At this point there was no specific information as to whether these were flats or maisonettes."

Is that correct?
A. That's correct. Obviously I was aware that they were flats but I wasn't aware that there may be maisonettes involved.

Q. Then about two thirds of the way down the page -- in fact, let's take it up halfway down the page:

"What was the extent of the fire you could see at this point?"

You make the point:

"It was difficult to see exactly where the fire
spread was due to the smoke and fire spread. It was also difficult to establish the exact layout of the building from the outside at that stage."

Then you were asked:

"Were you aware that the fire had spread from the 9th floor upwards?"

And you said:

"No, at that stage I had not realised."

Is that right?

A. That's correct. Obviously, my next sentence is that I believe that the fire could be spreading to any number of floors above those floors.

Q. And you went on to say, in the passage I've already referred to, that your view was that if you didn't put the fire out it would spread to the entire building?

A. That's correct.

Q. Obviously in our bundles we have still photographs, some of which are taken at moments perhaps when the smoke has cleared more than at other times. To what extent was it possible to get views like that shown in the photo at page 18 of the sequence of events when you were standing there, and to what extent was smoke obscuring your view?

A. I spent a very short period of time on that side of the building. Once I had briefed Station Manager Cartwright as to what I wanted him to do, I moved to the other side.
of the building to ensure that internal operations were
underway and were being conducted as I wanted them to be
conducted, so I was only for a very short period on that
side of the building.

Q. So what did you want Station Manager Cartwright to do?
A. I briefed Station Manager Cartwright that I wanted him
to take up the role of ops commander and that I wanted
him to coordinate external firefighting operations. One
of the issues that he had was that he was using a hand
control branch to fight the fire. We discussed how that
could be improved, and I asked him to bring the ground
monitor to bear on the external face of the building.

Q. In his role as operations commander, would he have
authority directly over Station Manager Foster?
A. He would. However, I had moved to that side of the
building and I was coordinating that area of operations
with Station Manager Foster.

Q. Is it the case, then, that you left
Station Manager Cartwright as operations commander to
coordinate efforts on the west side of the building?
A. That's correct.

Q. And you went personally to brief Station Manager Foster
on the east side of the building?
A. That's correct.

Q. I think you told us yesterday that you did that by
walking round the north end of the building?

A. That's correct.

Q. Turning, then, to your conversation with Station Manager Foster, where did you find him?

A. Station Manager Foster was at the -- at the base of the building on the other side of the building, in approximately the same area as the exit from the staircase.

Q. I've just put up photograph 2 from tab 14. Does that help you to remember roughly where he was?

A. Yes, that's exactly where he was. He was setting up the bridgehead as is shown there.

Q. In other words, under the tree?

A. That's correct.

Q. What did he tell you?

A. He -- he reiterated what had been said about conditions within the stairwell, that the stairwell was filling with smoke and that the smoke was moving down the stairwell, and that very unusual conditions were being experienced within the building, very difficult operational situation, and that he was sending BA crews into the building to carry out operations within the building.

Q. Did he tell you that he had personally committed crews into the building or that he was planning to do so?
A. No, it was my understanding that at no time was there a situation where no BA crews were in the building. My recollection is that the BA board was set up and that tallies were in that board, showing that wearers were committed to the building for firefighting.

Q. I can understand that there may have been crews still in the building, but what I want to know is whether he said that he had himself instructed more crews to go into the building since he had taken up his position?

A. I cannot recall that.

Q. In your second statement at page 323, the first question, about four lines down, was:

"What happened when you met Station Manager Foster?"

You said:

"After I had finished my brief with Station Manager Cartwright I went to the other side and I saw Station Manager Foster. Station Manager Foster was in charge of the bridgehead on the ground floor. He briefed me that the staircase was untenable and that there was smoke throughout the staircase to at least as low as the 4th floor. This affected my plan."

Can you explain what you meant there by "this affected my plan"?

A. Normally at an incident like this we would have set up the bridgehead on the upper floor of the building, and
that would have been my normal plan when dealing with an incident of this type. I wasn't, at that stage, clear as to exactly the extent of the fire within the building, so I was going through my operational options as I obviously approached Station Manager Foster to identify the best way to fight the fire.

Q. If I take you back to a passage in your first statement, July 2009, about this briefing at 314. In the second paragraph you mention your briefing to Station Manager Cartwright. You then made your way to what you call the front of the building -- by which you mean the east side of the building?

A. That's correct.

Q. -- to brief Station Manager Foster. You discussed the situation with him, confirmed that operations were being undertaken within the building. The statement says:

"I confirmed where he had committed firefighters to within the building."

At the end of that paragraph:

"At the time, Station Manager Foster informed me where exactly he had committed various crews but I am now unable to recall what exactly he informed me of."

Then in the next paragraph, the second sentence is the briefing you gave Station Manager Foster. It says:

"I then briefed Station Manager Foster on my
operational priorities, and at this time we received the information from a firefighter that a number of persons were trapped within their flats, most significantly flat 81. I was informed that there were people trapped in flat 81 specifically and that smoke was entering their flat. A number of other flat numbers were mentioned, but I cannot recall at this time."

Is it right that at the time when you were giving that initial briefing to Station Manager Foster you and he got information about flat 81?

A. That's correct. We received a lot of information and that information considered for a very significant amount of time. Obviously lots of information was coming in and that lasted for quite some time.

Q. This is a specific piece of information that you're recalling on 11 July 2009. You're recalling receiving it from a firefighter. Do you remember this now?

A. I cannot recall it specifically but I'm -- I'm sure that that's what happened, yes.

Q. Can you recall whether somebody came over with a note or whether they came over verbally and mentioned flat 81?

A. I believe it was mentioned verbally -- at the beginning it was mentioned verbally, but obviously we put in place a system where we could record the numbers that were being given to us, and those numbers were written down.
Q. The impression I'm getting from this statement is that both you and Station Manager Foster got this information at the time you were briefing him, so in other words shortly after you met up with him. Is that a fair interpretation?

A. That's a fair interpretation, yes.

Q. The information was that people were trapped. We've discussed the fact that "trapped" has a variety of meanings, but also the specific detail that smoke was entering their flat. Now that moves it along the scale of "trapped", doesn't it? Smoke is actually coming into the flat rather than merely being outside in the corridor. Do you agree?

A. It does.

Q. On receipt of that information, can you recall having any discussion with Station Manager Foster about where flat 81 was in the building?

A. I can't recall that. However, we were aware that flat 81 was on the 11th floor.

Q. Do you think you were aware of that at that time?

A. I believe so, because shortly afterwards when we committed crews to the incident we committed them directly to that floor for search and rescue purposes.

Q. In the next paragraph, the first sentence is:

"As well as this, I was able to see people on
balconies calling for rescue."

So those were balconies on the east side of the building?

A. They were.

Q. Can you recall what levels those people were on?

A. My recollection was -- was probably 5, 7 and 11.

Q. As I'm sure you now know, they would have to have been on even-numbered floors because they were on balconies.

A. Yes, that's right, yeah.

Q. The sense you're giving is that they were 6, 8 and 12.

A. Yes, that's correct, yeah.

Q. You had an opportunity to walk round the building from the west side to the east side. Your attention was now being drawn to people on balconies. What were your thoughts at this time about the nature and purpose of those balconies?

A. That they were balconies that formed part of the flats. I didn't form a view that they were part of any means of escape at the time. However, that didn't mean that they weren't or they were. I didn't have a view on it at that time.

Q. If I take you back to a photograph that I think I showed you yesterday, which is photograph 44, tab 13 of the jury bundle. That was taken on the west side, on the corner of Dalwood Street and Sedgmoor Place. You would
1. have walked past this point on your way around the
2. building?
3. A. That's correct.
4. Q. When walking round the building, and then when standing
5. on the east side and looking up and seeing people on
6. balconies, did your thoughts include consideration of
7. whether these were balconies that one could walk freely
8. along, or whether they were partitioned to prevent that?
9. A. Not at that stage, no.
10. Q. At that stage, do you think you noticed the white doors
11. at the end of balconies at the centre of the building?
12. A. I did not.
13. Q. Photograph 45 is a close-up view from where the previous
14. photo was taken. You can see now, I assume, the white
15. door?
16. A. I can.
17. Q. Is it your evidence that up until the point we're
18. talking about, your discussion with
19. Station Manager Foster and noticing people on balconies,
20. you haven't noticed those doors?
21. A. I haven't.
22. Q. At this time, is it right that you didn't give any
23. thought one way or the other to whether these balconies
24. might have a function, and specifically an escape
25. function?
A. I didn't.

Q. You've now had an opportunity to assess and evaluate the situation. Can you tell the court what your objectives were?

A. My objectives were to extinguish the fire and rescue people that were trapped in the building. The only way to do that was to secure the staircase for firefighting operations, to ensure suitable firefighters were available to enter the building to effect rescue and to ensure that sufficient water was available to fight the fire. All of these -- all of these issues had very complicated requirements due to the fact there was a fire on a number of floors.

Q. What was your plan?

A. My plan was to establish firefighting on the floors affected by fire so that crews could access the upper floors to try and effect rescues of people trapped there.

Q. After you had had that initial discussion with Station Manager Foster, did you remain with him or did you go elsewhere?

A. No, that was the main scene of operations and I remained there, although I did -- I did tour the fire ground with another officer to get some other jobs dealt with.

Q. So as incident commander, you took up your position on
the east side of the building?

A. That's correct.

Q. Who was briefing crews at this time? Was it you or Station Manager Foster, or someone else?

A. I briefed Station Manager Foster with what I required him to do, and he was involved with briefing crews. He also had other supervisory officers with him that were assisting with BA entry control, and they would have been assisting him with briefing.

Q. According to the records that we have, after the bridgehead moved to the east side, outside the building, a crew from New Cross was committed at around 17.06 and the next crew after that to be committed was from Lambeth at 17.26. Does that fit with your recollection of there being a gap of 20 minutes or so when no crews were being committed into the building?

A. As I said earlier, I wasn't aware of the situation. I cannot recall exactly the time that I reached Station Manager Foster and as I said earlier, I wasn't aware that firefighting crews had ceased to be committed to the incident. It was my understanding that crews were always in the building fighting the fire.

Q. What was the scene on the east side of the building? Were there lots of people waiting to be briefed and instructed or were there very few firemen but people
arriving in groups?

A. There was a number of people obviously making ready to enter the building and carrying out other operational roles, for instance bringing equipment et cetera to the -- to that side of the building. It was a very, very busy scene.

Q. If I take you to a couple of things that you said in your statements about your decision-making, firstly at page 315 in the first statement. The second line says:

"I requested that the London Ambulance Hazardous Response Team [the HART team] be made ready to be committed to the 11th floor as they had extended duration breathing apparatus capability. The purpose of directing them to the 11th floor was because I received a message from the command unit that there were numerous persons trapped on what was believed to be the 11th floor."

Are you able to assist at all with when in time that event was that you're describing in that passage? The request. Not the actual committing of them, but the idea.

A. Soon after I'd briefed Station Manager Foster and we discussed the resource implications required to mount operations. I was aware obviously that the LAS were in attendance in some large numbers, and I believe that
I spoke to the ambulance liaison officer on scene, who informed me that HART were available. I then considered whether or not that would be an operational possibility, to commit them with BA wearers from the London Fire Brigade, and that's when I began to form the plan that we would do that.

Obviously, other information was received about difficulty with crews having to travel a long distance to reach the scene of operations, very difficult conditions being undertaken in terms of heat stress, et cetera, which was causing breathing apparatus teams to use their air up very, very quickly indeed.

Q. So you have in mind the 11th floor at this stage?
A. That's correct.

Q. And you're conscious that people in standard duration breathing apparatus are going to use a lot of air simply getting to the 11th floor and getting back?
A. That's correct.

Q. So you are thinking: "Well, I could use the HART team with their extended duration breathing apparatus, potentially"?
A. Yes, obviously we had our own breathing apparatus wearers there as well with EDBA. However, the HART team had -- also obviously were trained paramedics and I was considering that it may be possible -- if we could
rescue people from the 11th floor, they may be able to be given immediate emergency care at that point rather than being brought out of the building first.

Q. If I take you then to your second statement, page 323.
I've taken you to the early part of your first answer, where you described being told the staircase was untenable and how this affected your plan. About three lines below that, it says:

"Taking into account my responsibility of rescuing the public and also to protect the firefighters, I had to decide the level of risk that firefighters would be taking by being committed to those areas. It was clear to me that there was a high risk of an injury or loss of life to firefighters by my actions, but I decided it was right for me to commit the firefighters to the floors above the fires to attempt to rescue the people trapped on the upper floors."

You went on:

"The firefighters could have become trapped, disorientated, suffered from heat stress or exhaustion or may have run out of air in their breathing apparatus due to the layout and size of the building. This meant that I had to commit crews to fight the fires and protect their escape and the evacuation of the public down the staircase."
Firstly, is that correct --

A. That's correct.

Q. -- as a setting out of your thought process?

A. That's correct, yes.

Q. Breaking that down, the first point I draw attention to is that as a matter of principle you were willing to commit firefighters to floors above the fire?

A. I was -- I was willing. I felt it was my responsibility to try and rescue as many people in the building as possible.

Q. I probably don't need to ask you to look at it -- we looked at it with Station Manager Cartwright -- but the sectorisation policy does have within it a diagram which illustrates a scenario of a search sector above a fire sector. So that's something that can be done?

A. A search sector can only be established where there is no risk of fire spread to the area where you're searching. If there is risk of fire spread, that sector is the fire sector.

Q. Perhaps I will ask you to have a look at the diagram then. It's at 1625 in the advocates' bundles, file 4.

(Handed) That diagram illustrates a situation in a high rise building where you have a search sector above a fire sector.

A. It does. However, in this case, as I said earlier, the
fire sector was the whole of the building above the fire floor, because the search sector would be a safe area where we wouldn't expect fire to spread to and we would conduct search operations within that sector without fear of fire spread. In this instance, the whole of the -- the building above the 5th floor was the fire sector because we did not have any information that suggested the fire was not spreading throughout the building.

Q. So what you were willing to do was to send firefighters to carry out search and rescue above the fire, but in an area that you would regard as a fire sector, rather than a safe search sector?

A. That's correct.

Q. So in other words something more dangerous than is envisaged in this diagram?

A. Yes, I believe that I was putting firefighters in great risk of injury and possible death. However, there was information that people may still be alive in that area of the building and myself and Station Manager Foster considered it a reasonable risk to take in those circumstances.

Q. Weighing up this situation about what the reasonable risk is, and looking at that answer you gave on 323 about the risks to firefighters, what sort of back-up
would you consider necessary before sending firefighters to carry out search and rescue above the fire?

A. We would need to have sufficient crews available for relief and emergency teams, sufficient firefighting media to look -- obviously to protect their egress and sufficient personnel -- and also control to ensure that everything was in place to protect them if they needed to get out in a hurry.

Q. Those types of back-up crews, would they go up with the first crew or would they be waiting at the bridgehead to go up if necessary?

A. No, emergency teams would be held at the bridgehead ready for committing and would be committed depending on the information received about the amount of air or the conditions that firefighters were experiencing where they were operating.

Q. Were you aware that a crew of four from New Cross was committed into the building to go to an upper level in the building?

A. I believe that was the case at the time, yes, but I have no real recollection about exactly which crews were committed to which area at this time.

Q. Is that because you don't remember now, or is it because that is at a level of detail that you wouldn't have been involved in as incident commander?
A. I think it's a little bit of both. Obviously we would have discussed where crews were within the building, but Station Manager Foster may not have told me exactly the firefighters which were carrying out exactly which roles in which areas. He would have given me a general brief about where crews were operating.

Q. Do you recall anything about them being instructed, as they went into the building, that they should also try and rescue someone from flat 56?

A. I don't, no.

Q. Do you recall ever hearing a radio message to the effect that all crews should leave the building except the New Cross crew?

A. No, I don't.

Q. Did there come a time when Station Manager Glenny arrived and was given a task?

A. Yeah, that's correct.

Q. What was he asked to do?

A. We were receiving lots of information about persons involved in the fire, and I asked Station Manager Glenny to assist Station Manager Foster in collating the information about people that were trapped within the building within individual flats, and also about information -- to try and gather information about people who had already left the scene so that we could
Q. Did Station Manager Glenny have a formal title, formal position?
A. That -- that title was that he would be sector commander rescue, and his only role was to gather information and to ensure that we knew about where people were positioned within the building.

Q. In your first statement, you said that you thought that task was given to him about the time when Deputy Assistant Commissioner Tim Chidgey arrived at the incident, which was at 17.12. Does that sound about right?
A. It sounds right, yes.

Q. Did that task, in essence, involve creating a list of flat numbers?
A. That's correct.

Q. Were you aware at that time that a list like that had previously been created or did you think this was being done from scratch for the first time?
A. There was -- there was a list being collated -- which was being collated formally by Station Manager Glenny, and I believe that other information was given to him and that may have come in written form. I don't know whether that's the same as you referred to though.

Q. Before you arrived on the scene, did you know that there
Q. If I just refer you to a couple of passages about things you knew in relation to flat numbers and then I'm going to look at some radio messages with you. Firstly, page 324 in your second statement. The final question is:

"Do you recall Station Manager Glenny giving you information?"

Your answer was:

"He was asked to collate information about specific flat numbers and to be sure where there were people trapped. I recall a series of numbers were mentioned in the high 70s and 80s and I asked him and Station Manager Foster to coordinate the rescue of those numbers."

Then at page 326, the final question was:

"Were you aware that the caller from 79 was in contact with control?"

Your answer was:

"I was aware that flat 79 was speaking with control. This number was passed on to the officers in charge of the bridgehead."

I think it's right that you thought that flats 79 and 81 were on the 11th floor?
1 A. That's correct.
2 Q. You mentioned in your evidence yesterday an occasion
3 when, as I recall, a note was passed to you and you gave
4 it on to Station Manager Foster; is that right?
5 A. I believe so.
6 Q. Can you remember whether that was in the initial
7 briefing to Station Manager Foster or later on?
8 A. I believe it was later on.
9 Q. What was the note?
10 A. I believe it had information about flat numbers on it.
11 Q. Do you know who gave it to you?
12 A. I can't recall who it was, no.
13 Q. Do you know what numbers were on it?
14 A. I believe that -- I believe it was numbers in 80, around
15 about 80.
16 Q. If I ask you now about some messages which were
17 circulated by radio or telephone with brigade control to
18 see whether they are pieces of information that you my
19 have known about at the time. Firstly in the advocates'
20 bundle, page 344. (Handed)
21
22 This is a typed-up note of a telephone call between
23 Paul Real at brigade control and command unit 4. It's
24 at 16.44.40. There's reference in it to flats 68 and
25 79. At the end, Mr Real, five lines from the bottom,
26 says:
"They're going to have to force an entry. But if you could do that as a matter of urgency, I'd appreciate it."

Are you able to recall whether information like that was passed to you when you arrived?

A. Not when I arrived, no.

Q. Later on?

A. A short time afterwards.

Q. Were you aware that Mr Ed Daly of the London Ambulance Service was in contact from time to time with a woman in flat 81?

A. I don't recollect that, no.

Q. I'll take you then to page 345, over the page. This is 16:59, another telephone call between Paul Real and command unit 4. In the sixth line, Mr Real asks about news on getting someone up to 68 and 79. About halfway down the page, it's said that:

"The lady in 79, her ceiling's coming down."

Then there's reference to flats 82 and 80:

"One of them might have a baby."

Do you recall being given information like that at an early stage?

A. Obviously this information -- at that time, I wasn't actually at the incident, and once we'd set up operations at the ground floor, we received lots of
information about various flats and about persons
trapped within those flats, and that information was
collated onto a list.

Q. Then if I take you over the page to 16.55. This is
Mr Real again to command unit 4:

"Flat 79 is the urgent one at the moment."
Then five lines from the bottom:
"We were talking to the woman. She's now stopped
talking to us and we can't hear her breathing at all."
And in the final line:
"79 seems to be the real big problem."

Is that information, in general terms, about 79
being the urgent concern information that you had at
an early stage after you arrived at the scene?

A. No, I didn't receive that specific information in those
terms, no.

Q. Then if I take you to 17.11. This is page 540. In the
middle of the page, command unit 4 confirms with brigade
control that:

"We here are aware of people in the four flats: 68, 79, 82, 80."

As I understand it, you were aware of flat 81 by
this time as well?

A. Yes, I believe that that may be the first list we
received at the bridgehead at the point we were at.
Q. It may not matter how you got the information, but am I right in thinking, on the basis of your earlier evidence, that at the time you were giving Station Manager Foster his initial briefing you became aware of people trapped in flat 81 and smoke coming into the flat?

A. I became aware of a number of flats, yes, and the one that I remember mostly is flat 81 at that time. However, I -- I recollect seeing those flat numbers and they would have been part of our plan at that time.

Q. Are you able to say whether, at that time, you had flat 79 in your mind as an even greater concern than flat 81?

A. I can't say that. At the time, my view would have been that all those flats were a priority. Looking at the building and the amount of smoke that was issuing from the building at that stage, they would have all been a priority.

Q. There came a point when Deputy Assistant Commissioner Chidgey arrived at the scene, and shortly after that he took over as incident commander and made you operations commander; is that right?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. If I take you to your notes you typed up shortly after the incident. Page 172 in the advocates' bundles. The
bottom paragraph says:

"I briefed DAC Chidgey on progress and was given
a further list of the flats where people were trapped.
This list was given to Station Manager Glenny, who
communicated this to the bridgehead so that further
information was available to crews on the whereabouts of
casualties."

Is that right?

A. That's correct.

Q. This further list, can you assist us with whether it, in
effect, confirmed what you already knew because it had
on it the numbers you already had or whether it had
different or new numbers?

A. My recollection is that it was a list that had come from
the command unit and it was a -- a combined list of all
the numbers that had been received so far.

Q. Yes, that doesn't quite answer my question, which is
whether you looked at it and recall seeing a number that
you hadn't seen before.

A. I don't recall that, no.

Q. Can you recall one way or the other whether it looked
like a list of numbers that you already had and knew
about?

A. I believe it would have done, yes.

Q. And then is it right that at about 17.25
Group Manager Andrews arrived and you asked him to take
command of the bridgehead?

A. Group Manager -- yes, that may be -- I'm not sure of the
exact time. However, at some point during the incident
I did ask Group Manager Andrews to take command of the
bridgehead.

Q. That would mean him taking over from
Station Manager Foster as sector commander fire?

A. Yes. I -- I discussed moving the bridgehead into the
building with Group Manager Andrews and that was what
we -- we did at that stage.

Q. If I take you to your first statement at 316 in the
statements bundle. In the middle of the page you talk
about what we just discussed: Group Manager Andrews
arriving and what you asked him to do. The final
paragraph says you asked the aerial ladder platform to
be positioned on the east side of the building, on the
north-east corner, and then, three lines down:

"The crew of the aerial ladder platform was briefed
to try and control the development of the fire showing
from the corridor window and provide a covering spray to
the east face of the building to protect a man and
a child who were visible on a balcony."

Can you just explain what a covering spray is?

A. The aerial ladder platform has a monitor on it, and it
has a variable method of applying water, so it can apply
a solid jet or it can apply a spray which can be varied
so that it can provide almost like a shower, if you
like.

Q. You told us earlier about risks -- actually, it may have
been Station Manager Cartwright, but as I understand it
there are risks associated with using a full-powered
spray yet from an aerial ladder platform if there were
people near the target area?

A. That's correct.

Q. What you're describing here is something less powerful
and therefore safer?

A. Yes. In effect, by putting up a water curtain you could
deflect smoke from reaching people or you could cool the
conditions that they were in and effectively protect
them from fire that may or may not have been attacking
them.

Q. I'm putting on screen photograph 8, which has the aerial
ladder platform. If, for example, you had a fire at one
end of the balcony and people gathered as far away from
it as possible at the other end of the same balcony,
does it follow from what you've been saying that you
could use a covering spraying to protect them and reduce
the risk of fire and smoke spreading along the balcony
to them?
A. It does.
Q. Is that a recognised technique?
A. It is.
Q. I'm going to ask you now about a passage in your first statement at 318 about some perceived access difficulties in the building. That third paragraph says:
"Crews reported to me that flats had security doors within some of the individuals flats' entrances. These security measures made it difficult to access the flats."
Just pausing there, in terms of what you meant by that, did you mean their front doors had security features or were you talking about doors onto corridors?
A. What I was trying to say was that some of the flats did have security doors fitted to them, but also it was clear that there were steel doors which led onto the balcony which were accessed by a drop key --
Q. In fact, that's a separate point, later in the paragraph.
A. Okay.
Q. Just dealing firstly with flats with security doors within some of the individual flats' entrances. It's a short point. Is that --
A. Yes, that was reported me and I believed that to be the
Q. The short point is this: are you talking about a door from a lobby area to a corridor, leading to a number of flats, or are you talking about individual front doors?
A. I'm talking about individual front doors.
Q. Thank you. Then the next sentence was:
"It was also reported that some of the balconies could not be accessed due to security measures. The keys that crews carry to open the drop key boxes did not work so the doors could not be opened. It was reported that some of the internal locks within them were broken, which prevented access from the staircase onto the balconies."
A. That's correct.
Q. You may or may not know this, but to get to the balconies from the central staircase, you have to go through two sets of doors: one that leads off the central staircase into a lobby area, and then from there onto the balcony itself. Do you know which sets of doors you're saying there were problems with?
A. No, I -- obviously I didn't spend very much time inside the building at all during the operational stage of the incident, and at that time I was told simply that there were doors which accessed those areas and that crews were finding -- having difficulty gaining access and
were having to force those doors open to gain access.

Q. That was the next point I was going to come to, whether this was an inconvenience which could be overcome with the use of a sledgehammer and brute force or whether it was something more problematic than that.

A. It would have presented them with difficulties, because obviously they needed to find out how to open the door first of all, in probably zero visibility, due to the smoke-log, and then when they found that they couldn't operate the keys, they then had to find tools that would be effective in breaking through those doors.

Q. Then you finish off that paragraph about the balconies by saying this:

"... balconies, which was considered as an alternative access for our fire crews and also an escape route for the residents."

When did you come to that view of the balconies as a potential means of getting crews to people or getting residents out of the building?

A. During operations, as crews were being committed I was able to see crews accessing those balconies and also to see people walking along them. So I was aware at that stage that they were accessible throughout their length, so that was when we were able to make that decision. Obviously by that time crews had already worked that out
for themselves and they were using that as a means of
access to people trapped in the building.

Q. Trying to put a timeframe on when you became aware of
that function of the balconies, was it while you were
incident commander?
A. I don't believe so.

Q. I've come to the end of asking you questions about what
you did as incident commander and operations commander.
What I want to ask you about next is knowledge that you
gained of Lakanal House while incident commander and
operations commander. When answering if you were aware
of any of the features I'm going to ask you about, if
you could indicate whether you became aware as incident
commander or later as operations commander, that would
be very helpful.
A. Yes, sir.

Q. Firstly, were you aware that Lakanal House had a single
central staircase?
A. I was.

Q. Were you aware of that immediately, or did you become
aware of it because you sent someone to check?
A. Initially, I made the assumption that there was a single
staircase within the building from looking at the
building and its construction. I then had that
confirmed to me and it was further confirmed by
Group Manager Andrews when he arrived. I asked him to double check to make sure there were no other means of escape from the building.

Q. So you worked on the assumption, correctly, of a single central staircase, and at some point you got somebody to check it and they confirmed?

A. That's correct.

Q. Were you aware that there were no central corridors on even-numbered floors?

A. I became aware of that, yes, probably while I was still incident commander.

Q. When did you become aware, do you think, that the flats were maisonettes?

A. My recollection -- my recollection is that I was given information very shortly after taking over as incident commander that there were maisonettes within the building. However, I was unable to confirm whether all the flats were maisonettes or whether some were flats and some were maisonettes.

Q. I think it follows from that that you were not for a long time aware that all the flats were essentially identical in layout?

A. That's correct.

Q. Because your thoughts for some time were that some were flats and that some were maisonettes?
A. That's correct.

Q. Were you aware that on the upper floors of each flat they extended the full width of the building, with windows on both the east and the west sides?

A. I wasn't aware of that until much later in the incident.

Q. When you say "much later in the incident", are we talking after 7 o'clock?

A. That's correct.

Q. I'm going to ask you now about building up a mental picture of where flats were in the building. You knew -- or believed, as I understand it, from an early stage -- that flat 81 was on the 11th floor?

A. That's correct.

Q. I have up on screen now an image of what Lakanal House looks like from the west side of the building, not showing flat numbers but giving floor numbers. If I place over it the flat numbers and ask you whether at any time you began to build up a mental picture of where flats were that looked like that?

A. No, I didn't.

Q. Were you aware at any time that there were signs within the building giving indications as to where flats were within it?

A. During -- during -- some time within -- within the incident, I did enter the building and I did see signs
with floor levels showing numbers, yes. I can't be sure when that was.

Q. Did you see the one by the lifts at ground floor level?
A. I believe so.

Q. I'll just show it to you. That's the ground floor lift lobby, photo 7, with the sign above the lifts. Photo 8 is a close-up of it. You think you saw that at some stage later in the incident?
A. I think so.

Q. But in any event, you knew from a relatively early stage that flats 79 and 81 were on the 11th floor?
A. That's correct.

Q. What I want to ask you about now is whether, if you had had more information, a certain course of action would have been one you would have been willing to take as incident commander. What I'm putting up on screen is a configuration of a typical west-facing flat. Both flats 79 and 81 were laid out like this, so at their lower level having two bedrooms with windows over the west side and a bathroom, and then, on the upper level, having a kitchen on the west side, but importantly for the purposes of these questions, a lounge on the east side with a balcony access.

Now, I appreciate you did not know that that was the layout at the time because you did not know that on the
upper floor flats extended the width of the building,
but what I wanted to ask you is this: if you'd known
about that layout and you had known that there was
a means to communicate with persons in the bathroom,
would you have advised them to make their way up the
stairs within their flat, into the lounge, out of the
doors onto the balcony, and then to the end of the
balcony furthest from the fire?
A. Very possibly I would have done that, yes.
Q. Because that might have been a safer place for them to
be than the bathroom in flat 81; is that right?
A. That's right, yes.
Q. The advantages and disadvantages of that course of
action could have been influenced by the use of
a covering spray in the manner that you've described; is
that right?
A. That's right.
Q. Secondly, on the same theme, we've heard about your
willingness to put your crews at risk in a calculated
way and to send them up to carry out search and rescues
above the fire. If you had known at an early stage
about the escape route from the balcony via the central
staircase to ground floor level, would you have been
willing to commit crews to use that route in reverse and
try and reach people on the balconies on the
even-numbered floors on the east side of the building?

A. Can you repeat the question, please?

Q. I'll try and illustrate it. This image shows the different potential escape routes from flats which have their front door and bedrooms on the west side of the building. So flat 81 would be an example of this.

We've just been discussing the fact that in theory one could ask people in the bathroom of flat 81 to go up the stairs within their flat, through the lounge and out of the door I'm marking here onto the east balcony, and you've explained that you might well have asked them to wait in a position of relative safety on the east balcony and use a covering jet to provide them with additional protection. My question relates to the fact that at the other end of the east balcony you can get through a door and make your way into the central staircase and to ground floor level, and what I was trying to get to -- not as clearly as I should have been -- was that as well as that being a route for residents to make their way down out of the building, it's also equally a potential route for firefighters to use to get up to people in the building.

A. That's correct. It is my understanding that that was used by firefighters to rescue people on the 11th floor.

Q. Does it follow that as soon as you had been aware that
there was a potential route to people on the balconies on the 12th floor -- because they're even-numbered -- which didn't involve going along central corridors within the building but involved going up the stairs and getting out onto the 12th floor balcony, you would have been willing to commit crews to do that, provided there were sufficient crews in reserve for the back up functions that you've explained?

A. Yeah, that's possible. However, obviously, the fire situation on that side of the building was a lot worse than the east side.

Q. No, I'm talking about doing it on the east side.

A. Sorry, I thought you said the west balcony.

Q. If I did, it was my mistake.

A. Okay.

Q. So the point is this: as soon as you were aware that it was possible to send crews up the central staircase directly to the 12th floor balcony on the east side to rescue people, then consistent with your approach to this incident and the calculated risks you were willing to take, you would have been willing to give that instruction, provided there were sufficient crews in reserve, wouldn't you?

A. Yes.

Q. Then my final question is this: looking back over your
involvement on the day of the fire, as incident commander, what single additional thing do you think would have most helped you to carry out your command role?

A. I think it's clear that early on in the incident a set of plans, if they had been available, would have assisted greatly in understanding the layout of the building. At quite an early stage, the LALO was requested to attend the incident, the local authority liaison officer, and those plans were requested and I don't think they were forthcoming. Clearly, those plans would have had an effect on our ability to deal with the incident.

Equally, the arrangements within the central staircase which allowed it to become smoke-logged -- if those -- if those passive fire protection measures were more suitable then we would have found it more easy to fight the fire.

Q. Thank you very much. I have no further questions.

THE CORONER: Thank you. Mr Hendy.

Questions by MR HENDY

MR HENDY: Mr Freeman, my name's Hendy. I represent some of the bereaved families. Can I just ask you about that last point. I didn't quite understand your answer. You said if the arrangements in the central staircase had
not made it so easy to be smoke-logged, or that was the
gist that I understood from your answer. What
arrangements could have prevented that situation?
A. Normally -- normally in a high rise building which we --
which is provided with a firefighting shaft, the shaft,
with the stairwell and the lift within it, would have
been fire-resisting, and that would have included smoke
resistance so that smoke could not travel into that
stairwell. That stairwell became smoke-logged very
quickly into the incident, and I believe it was because
it was not separated from the rest of the building, and
that's why it gave us operational difficulties.
Q. Can you just explain that a little bit more. As we
understood it, there's fire-resistant doors on each
level where there's a corridor, so in order to get from
the stairwell you have to pass through a set of doors
and then into a lobby, and then there's a fire-resistant
doors into each corridor north and south that you pass
into the lift lobby. Was that your understanding?
A. That would have been my understanding of what would have
been required at the building. However, I believe that
that wasn't the case and that smoke was able to travel
throughout the building because those arrangements were
not in place.
THE CORONER: Can I just stop you there, Mr Freeman. I'm
not sure whether you're talking about something that comes from your own knowledge?

A. My knowledge -- well, yes, madam, in the fact that obviously I'm aware of the standards required for building construction because of my role as a fire safety officer, and I would have expected those standards to be carried out in that building.

THE CORONER: I see.

Well, Mr Hendy, I think it's probably more appropriate for us to be taking up the detail of this with other witnesses who can talk about it authoritatively.

MR HENDY: Absolutely, but there was just one point from it which I wanted to ask. We will ask other witnesses about the composition of the door and whether there was mesh which let air through and so on and so forth, but inevitably if you're fighting fires on any particular floor, you have to get the hose into the corridor, which means that the door has to be partially open. But as I understand your view of it, it was not simply that the doors were open wide enough for firefighters to go in and out and to allow hoses to lie through the doors that caused the smoke; it was something else beyond that?

A. That's correct.

Q. Something about the doors, you think?
A. Yes.

Q. Mr Freeman, when you arrived, according to your statement at 312 -- no need to put it up -- I think you say that you went to the command unit and booked in your attendance. You had radioed control to say you were at the site, I think, at 16.57.39. We have that in our sequence of events. The jury has it tab 12, page 20: "16.57.39. GM Freeman reports in attend at the incident."

Does that sound right to you?

A. That's correct.

Q. Before you made that radio message, you parked your car and got on your firefighting kit?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. You then locked the car and walked over to the command unit?

A. That's correct.

Q. How far was the car from the command unit?

A. Possibly 10/15 feet away.

Q. Oh, right. So you're there at about 16.58?

A. That's correct.

Q. You book into the command unit?

A. I did.

Q. That means putting your name on a roll board?

A. That means putting my roll board in the unit, yes.
Q. Putting your roll board in?
A. Yeah.

Q. Yes. And there was one person only in the command unit at the time?
A. I believe that at the time that I booked and I left my board in the unit, the other operator had moved to the incident ground to -- probably to give some information to the incident commander, so at that time there was no-one in the unit.

Q. It was Mr Best, and you came across him a little bit later on, I think.
A. That's correct.

Q. So there was one person in the command unit, and in your statement you say that no information was available at the unit at the time because they were still in the process of setting the unit up. Does it follow that the computer wasn't operating at that stage?
A. It does.

Q. The officer in charge of the unit was engaged on the phone and radio?
A. As I've said already, I believe that at that time the other officer on the unit wasn't actually on the unit. He was doing something else.

Q. But there was somebody there?
A. No.
Q. Oh, there was nobody there. Forgive me, I've
misunderstood you. So there was nobody there, the
computer wasn't working and there was simply nobody
there to give you information and no visible information
for you to pick up?
A. That's correct.
Q. So then you go to the incident and you find incident
commander Cartwright within a couple of minutes,
presumably?
A. Yes.
Q. You ask him for a briefing?
A. Yes.
Q. With him is Mr Howling, yes?
A. That's correct.
Q. Mr Glenny?
A. I have no recollection of Mr Glenny being there at that
time, but I believe he was there.
Q. And Mr Best?
A. That's correct.
Q. Mr Howling's talking to Mr Cartwright, giving him
information, and then Mr Cartwright gave you a briefing?
A. That's correct.
Q. Mr Cartwright told the jury that when you arrived, after
him giving you an initial briefing you asked him for
more information, but he, Mr Cartwright, told you that
he didn't have a full brief yet, and he asked Mr Howling
to give you both a brief. Do you remember that?
A. I remember having a discussion with both Mr Cartwright
and Mr Howling, yes.
Q. Was Mr Howling giving you part of the briefing?
A. Yes.

THE CORONER: Mr Hendy, can you find a convenient point
where you've come to the end of a topic?
MR HENDY: Of course, madam. Shall we take the break now?
Is that convenient?
THE CORONER: If it's convenient to you to stop at that
point. Thank you, we'll have a ten minute break.
Do leave your papers, members of the jury, if that
helps.
Mr Freeman, you remember the rule I gave to you
about not speaking to anyone in the break.
A. Thank you, madam.
THE CORONER: Back in ten minutes, please.

(A short break)

THE CORONER: Thank you.
(In the presence of the Jury)

THE CORONER: Yes, Mr Hendy, thank you.
MR HENDY: Thank you, madam.
Mr Freeman, we were just talking about the briefing you received from Mr Cartwright and Mr Howling. Were you told that the whole of the 9th floor had been searched?

A. I wasn't.

Q. Were you told that the 10th floor southern section had been searched?

A. I wasn't.

Q. Were you told that there had been no search and rescue anywhere else in the building?

A. No, I wasn't told that.

Q. In your second statement, you say that you can't recall if any flat numbers were mentioned in that briefing. I don't suppose your recollection's any better today than it was a few days after?

A. No.

Q. We looked at some radio reports. Can we just refresh our memory. Advocates' bundle, page 344, please. These are, you recall, conversations on the telephone between Mr Real in control and command unit 4 at 16.44, so perhaps a quarter of an hour or so before you were having your briefing. In that conversation, Mr Real tells the command unit that control are still talking to two callers, they're in a right old state, there's a lot of smoke in the flats. The flats are 68 and 79 and
Mr Real wants somebody up there really quick. Command unit 4 promises to do that straight away.

Then if you look over the page at 345, five minutes later, still a few minutes before you arrive, command unit 4 says in answer to the question "Any news on getting someone up to 68 and 79?"

"Yeah, I've spoken to the incident commander and he's aware of it. He's ... he's definitely on the case. They've definitely got crews up there."

Then there's the mention of the lady in 79 with her ceiling coming down. The incident commander then, Mr Cartwright told us, would have been Mr Howling. No mention of these things to you in that briefing?

A. Not as -- no.

Q. Was there any mention of anybody being trapped anywhere?

A. Not specifically, no, but obviously there was mention that people were trapped within the building.

Q. There's mention that people were ...?

A. Trapped within the building.

Q. I know it's a long time ago, but what was said?

A. Words to the effect that people are trapped within the building, crews had been committed at an early stage to try and effect a rescue, that conditions were worsening within the building, all of the things that I spoke about earlier: that the bridgehead had been removed.
because fire was spreading throughout the stairwell. It was clear from very early on that people were trapped within the building. However, the specific numbers weren't made available to me until a few minutes later.

Q. So you were left with the impression that crews had already been committed to look for the people who had been trapped, were you?

A. As -- as you said to me earlier, there was talk about crews being sent into the building to search, and I believe that some search had been carried out. However, I wasn't given a specific briefing about where those searches had occurred.

Q. Or whether it was complete?

A. Yeah, that's correct.

Q. Were you told that the flat in which the fire had started, number 65 on the 9th floor, was confirmed to be empty of occupants?

A. I wasn't.

Q. Were you told anything about the flats immediately above, 79 and 80, being confirmed to be free of occupants?

A. No.

Q. The bridgehead had been ordered to come down from the 7th to the 3rd floor. Were you told that the consequence of that was that apart from the firefighting
still going on on the 9th floor in flat 65, there was no
other firefighting going on in the building?

A. I wasn't told that, no.

Q. And that there was no other search and rescue going on
at that time?

A. I wasn't told that, no.

Q. Your first instruction on arriving at that fire was to
make pumps 12 and aerials two?

A. That's correct.

Q. And you told Mr Best from the command unit to go off and
give that order?

A. That's correct.

Q. It was clear to you that resources had been
underestimated until that point?

A. The fire appeared to be spreading -- the officers had
informed me of that -- and so it was my -- it was my
decision to increase resources at the incident.

Q. It was clear that resources had been underestimated
until that point?

A. I don't know if you can say that. What I can say is
that obviously the fire was continuing to spread and
that we were unable to extinguish the fire at that time,
so we required more resources.

Q. Isn't the reality, Mr Freeman, that when you arrived you
found what can only be described as a shambles so far as
the firefighting was concerned?

A. The initial incident commanders had followed procedure and had set up basic firefighting operations required for high rise. They had followed the incident plan that they had put in place at the beginning of the incident and they obviously had encountered severe operational difficulties and so that plan was being re- -- reestablished at that time.

Q. In your statement, at page 318 in the second paragraph, you say this -- perhaps we could just put it on the screen for the jury and yourself. In the second paragraph, it says:

"In my experience as a firefighter, I've never seen such a fire spread in such an uncontrolled way, from floor to floor and flat to flat. My operational training, as well as my fire safety training, gave me cause to believe that the fire operation within the building was not as it should have been."

That's what you found, isn't it, that it wasn't as it should have been?

A. That was my assumption on arrival.

Q. You've told the jury, in answer to Mr Maxwell-Scott, what your priorities were, and you acted on those priorities immediately, didn't you?

A. I did.
Q. Some time subsequently you heard about flats 79 and 81 and that they were on the 11th floor?
A. That's correct.
Q. You made sure that Station Manager Foster had that information, yes?
A. Yes.
Q. What he says in a statement -- he'll give evidence later but I just put it to you to see whether you agree with it -- is that having learned that there was a family of five trapped in flat 81 on the 11th floor, he says:
   "I immediately sent in a extended duration breathing apparatus team of five from Clerkenwell to rescue them, and on the advice of my operational commander, Mr Freeman [you], sent in the HART team from London Ambulance Service too."
Do you remember that?
A. That's correct.
Q. That was absolutely the right thing to do, wasn't it?
A. I believe so.
Q. He goes on to say that he subsequently received a list of five or six flats where people were believed trapped. He says he doesn't remember the numbers, but 50s, 60s, 70s. He says:
   "I advised the watch manager at the bridgehead to send in teams of two using breathing apparatus to
specific flat numbers to perform a snatch rescue, and
also to take hose and branches to use if required.
I believe I gave instructions to the watch manager to
ensure there were teams directed to all flats on the
list."

Absolutely the right thing to do, wasn't it?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. In reality, looking back, Mr Freeman, there's no reason
why those steps couldn't have been taken earlier?

A. It's a very difficult decision to take and I had to give
it a lot of thought before I took that decision myself.
To ask a junior officer to take that decision may have
been too much to ask under that -- under the pressure
that he was under at that stage.

Q. Sorry, just give me one moment. (Pause)

Yes, just a couple more matters if you would,
Mr Freeman. The bridgehead was subsequently moved to
the 3rd floor from the ground floor. Do you remember
that?

A. That's correct.

Q. In your statement, at page 325, you say:

"It did not seem to take long for the bridgehead to
be moved and crews were not withdrawn during the move
and firefighting operations continued."

Is that right?
A. That's correct. That is correct.

Q. When a bridgehead is moved -- I appreciate how unusual that is, but when a bridgehead is moved, unless there's some specific reason for it, firefighting can continue during the move, can't it?

A. I would -- the -- the policy would say not, in my view.

Q. Say that again?

A. The policy would say that that was not the case. The policy would say that if you're going to move the bridgehead, you should cease operations and recontinue after you've reestablished the bridgehead.

Q. But in this case, you felt the policy required to be overridden because of the need to firefight?

A. That was a decision I took, yes.

Q. Yes. Subsequently, you received information from the command unit on the position of persons trapped in flats. I'm reading from your statement at page 317. You say:

"This was both by radio and hard copy of message. This was given to the officers in charge of the bridgehead control in order to assist in their search."

Is that something that would normally happen, or a line of communication that you set up?

A. That was -- that would be something that would normally happen.
Q. I don't suppose you can help us but I'll ask you anyway: do you know when it was that the command unit became capable of giving information about persons trapped in flats and actually gave information?

A. I can't answer that, no, I'm sorry.

Q. Just let me make one last check. Yes, one small point. Can we just put up your witness statement at page 322, please. Mr Maxwell-Scott took you to this. Just below halfway down, there's a question:

"Were you aware that the fire had spread from the 9th floor upwards?"

And your answer was:

"No, at that stage I had not realised."

This is just after the briefing, just after you'd taken command:

"I could see that lots of floors had smoke issuing and that flames were also coming out. My view at that stage was the fire could be spreading anywhere within the building."

We know that you came on the scene at about a couple of minutes before 5 o'clock in the evening. Can we just look at some photos and see whether your recollection in fact is correct about not realising that the fire had spread from the 9th floor upwards. Could we start in the jury bundle at tab 12 at the photograph on page 7.
Do you have the jury bundle there at all, Mr Freeman?
We want tab 12 at page 7. This is the situation at
16.39, so 20 minutes before you arrive, and we can see
the fire burning on the 9th floor.

Then if you go on the photo on page 9. We're now
a minute or two later at 16.40, and there, in the bottom
of the photograph, you can see the fire has gutted one
of the bedrooms on the 9th floor and is now attacking
the 10th floor, where the balcony is.

If we go from that to photograph 11. We're now at
16.42, so a quarter of an hour or so before you arrive,
and we can see the burned-out shell of the bedroom on
the 9th floor, the blackened balcony on the 10th floor,
and there we can see the flames have solid hold on the
11th floor. That was at 16.42.

At photograph 13, at 16.46, we can see the fire is
very substantial on the 11th floor now. At 14, 16.47,
ten minutes before you arrive, we can see that the
bedrooms on the 11th floor have been gutted. One of the
bedrooms, I should say.

At photograph 15, we can see from a wider angle shot
the damage done to the 11th floor. At 16 you can see
a similar thing. We're now at 16.49. At 17, we're now
at 16.50, and there's a sudden flare-out from the 11th
floor, and at 16.51 on page 18 we can see the smoking
remains of the bedroom on the 11th floor.

So just looking at that sequence of photographs, Mr Freeman, I wonder really whether it's correct that you hadn't realised that the fire had spread from the 9th floor upwards when you looked on the west side of the building shortly after you arrived?

A. I think in my statement what I was saying is that I wasn't aware of the extent of the fire spread. I had realised that the fire had attacked the upper floors, but I wasn't aware of the extent of that spread.

Q. I understand, and this statement, of course, is taken by somebody else, so I'm not criticising the way it's expressed. It must have been apparent to you that the 11th floor was on fire?

A. That's correct.

Q. Right at the end of your witness statement, at page 327, just above the last question, your last sentence is this:

"Despite efforts by firefighters to rescue all of the building, some of those removed were overcome and subsequently died, and this has been very difficult to deal with and very traumatic both for myself and other firefighters at the scene."

Mr Freeman, that's understood, but I'd like to say on behalf of my clients that nobody could criticise what
you did. You did everything that was conceivably possible to effect rescue. It's unfortunate that they didn't succeed and it was too late, but that's another matter. You have nothing to reproach yourself with.

THE CORONER: Thank you, Mr Hendy. Mr Dowden? Ms Al Tai?

MS AL TAI: No thank you, madam.

THE CORONER: Mr Matthews.

Questions by MR MATTHEWS

MR MATTHEWS: Mr Freeman, can I just ask you a little. Clearly, you haven't written down times, and no-one would expect you to write down times or remember times. You mentioned a request for building plans. I can deal with other witnesses who can tell us who recorded the time that that was requested and from whom, but can I get your help on what you would have liked to have learnt at that time from building plans?

A. I would have liked to have learnt the exact location of the entrances to each flat and obviously the layout of those flats, and also escape corridors, et cetera.

Q. So if we break it down, it's floor layout that you'd have been interested in?

A. Yes, that's correct. Obviously in my experience it's quite an unusual building.

Q. So floor layout, the fact that these were escape decks or balconies?
A. That's correct.

Q. And presumably confirmation that this was a single staircase and where that staircase was and which doors led to the staircase?

A. Yes, but that information was easy to obtain at the --
on the -- at the incident, obviously.

Q. Can you bear with me if I ask you to look at a document that we have in our jury bundle. It's behind tab 18. I'd imagine, Mr Freeman, you are familiar with it. It's the high rise firefighting policy. Tab 19, sorry, forgive me.

I'd imagine, though I don't know, that there may have been a number of versions of this policy over time. This is the November 2008 version of the policy, so it pre-dates the Lakanal incident. Can I ask you to look at page 1529, which is appendix 5, "Pre-planning". It's half way down the page. We can see that it describes that:

"During 72D visits, personnel should ensure they are familiar with the following ...

That gives us then a list of bullet points. They start with:

"Location and accuracy of information available on site."

But you can see that as we go down, it includes
floor layouts, fire-resisting compartmentation and additional security measures, eg security grills et cetera. It has evacuation arrangements down there, and further on, means of access and egress from the building.

A. That's correct.

Q. If you look after those bullet points, it's telling the crews who carry out a 72D visit that they should inform the building owner of defects or safety issues concerning firefighting facilities and "also report these to the resource management centre as an alleged fire risk".

THE CORONER: Can I just stop you there, Mr Matthews.

I wonder whether Mr Freeman is the right person to be directing these questions to.

MR MATTHEWS: I haven't come to the question, but this is it: the resource management centre, is that connected with the fire safety officer function?

A. It is. Can I just explain my answer?

THE CORONER: Well, Mr Freeman, I think we're going to have others who are going to be dealing with these issues.

I'm not really sure that Mr Freeman's the right person to be asked about it.

MR MATTHEWS: Forgive me. I've asked enough.

THE CORONER: Thank you. Mr Compton.
Questions by MR COMPTON

MR COMPTON: Mr Freeman, two matters, please. Firstly,

I note in your statement -- and I wonder if we could
just look at it. Page 326. I think this is your second
witness statement, page 6 of 7. Do you see, about
halfway down, the question:

"The early crews were aware that these were
maisonettes. Would you have expected this information
to be passed on?"

Do you have that question there?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Your answer is:

"Yes, but those individuals were involved in the
incident . . ."

And then you mention the bit about the plans:

"Although there was mention of maisonettes, there
was also mention that some were flats."

Was it your understanding from any of the
firefighters, directly or through word of mouth, that in
fact there were single apartments there?

A. That information wasn't coming from firefighters, no.

Q. Where did that information come from?

A. I think obviously members of the public were giving
information to firefighters about flat numbers and there
may have been a natural assumption to assume that they
were flats not maisonettes.

Q. Yes, because we know that you were, as you've said --
and we've looked at the list -- I think you took over as
incident commander at about 5.19; is that correct?
A. Some time around that time, yeah.

Q. Right. The other matter I want to ask you is this:
I understand that your evidence is that you weren't
aware that a previous list had been compiled, a list of
people who needed rescuing?
A. Not the original list, no.

Q. Right. So that you understand the evidence on this, the
jury have heard evidence from Firefighter Mullins, one
of the first on the scene, who was asked to compile
a list by Incident Commander Howling. All right? So
that's the background. We know that this list was
compiled at about 4.30. Okay? That's the evidence that
we've heard so far.

Firefighter Mullins had got that information
directly from control. All right? There were five
flats mentioned. On the list, he says "persons trapped"
and then we have flats 78, 79, 80, 81 and 57. All
right? So that's the background.

If you had been the incident commander at the time,
just looking at your experience and training, what would
you have done with that list?
A. If I'd have been aware that I could access those flats, I would have attempted to rescue those people.

Q. When you attended -- and one echoes what's been said by Mr Hendy: this is no criticism of you at all -- would you expect at the least that information to be passed to you?

A. Yes, and I did receive information about flat numbers very soon after I arrived at the incident.

Q. But I think the evidence that you have given is that you instruct Mr Glenny to go and make a list of persons who need rescuing?

A. That's correct. I wanted him to make sure that all the numbers that we had were on that list.

Q. Do you know how he then went about that task?

A. No, I delegated that task to him.

THE CORONER: Surely you must ask Mr Glenny that?

MR COMPTON: But I just want to understand what the direction was. Did you instruct him in particular how to get that information?

A. No, I asked him to collate a list of the numbers and to pass that information to Station Manager Foster and to make sure that that was a comprehensive list of all the numbers that we'd received.

Q. It's an obvious point, but if one looks at the timing, would you agree that this must have been some time after
5.19/5.20, when you had been the incident commander?

A. Yes.

Q. Then if one is correct and Firefighter Mullins is correct, that must be some three quarters of an hour after the original list had been compiled?

A. Possibly, yes.

Q. Right, if he compiled the list at about 4.30. Thank you?

THE CORONER: Thank you, Mr Walsh.

Questions by MR WALSH

MR WALSH: Two very short topics. First of all, I just need to clarify something which Mr Compton's just asked you about. He put to you a number of times -- or twice, I think -- that you took over as incident commander some time after 17.19. Mr Maxwell-Scott took you, however, yesterday to the reality of the position, which was -- let me just get this clear from you -- that you made the order for Mr Cartwright to make pumps 12, aerials two. That was your decision?

A. That was.

Q. And you were then in command?

A. I was.

Q. And that we know from our documentation was a decision passed at 17.04?

A. That's correct.
Q. So you were in command by 17.04?
A. Yes.

Q. But the message that you had taken over was radioed later --
A. That's correct, yes.

Q. -- because it was a non-priority. All right.

Just quickly, can I take you to clarify two matters, one which was asked on behalf of the families. Can I take you to page 318 of the statement bundle, please. This is a statement dated 11 July. You'll see the second paragraph. I'm going to explain this. It's already been put to you, but I want to see what you mean by the words "fire operation". You say:

"In my experience as a firefighter I've never seen a fire spread in such an uncontrolled way from floor to floor and flat to flat. My operation training, as well as fire safety training, gave me cause to believe that the fire operation within the building was not as it should have been."

Did you mean by that --

MR HENDY: I think perhaps not lead the question.

MR WALSH: Very well. Sorry, quite right. Could you explain, please, what you meant by "fire operation"?

A. I meant the passive fire safety arrangements within the building were not as they should have been. Obviously
it was my view that the building construction -- there
were some issues around the way the fire-resistant
construction within the building was not holding back
the fire as it should do.

Q. I see.

THE CORONER: So you're not talking there, you say, about
the way in which the firefighting had been conducted?

A. I'm not talking about firefighting operations, no; I'm
talking about the structure of the building.

THE CORONER: I see. Thank you.

MR WALSH: Touching, then, upon firefighting operations,
from the point at which you were mobilised -- when it
was, at that stage, it was reported to you, a fire in
a single flat -- upon arrival, did you glean -- you were
hearing reports, we've heard, that you were going along
before you arrived at the scene, but on your arrival at
the scene, did you glean any information at that time
about the speed at which the fire had developed to what
you then could see, and the impact that that would have
had upon firefighting tactics?

A. It was clear to me, obviously from the timescale
involved, that the fire had spread very, very quickly
throughout a large amount of the building, and that it
was going to be very difficult to contain the fire.

Q. All right. The last topic. You were asked at the end
of Mr Maxwell-Scott's questions about the layout of the flats, of the maisonettes, on two floors, and you were asked if you had known that the bathroom was on the lower floor, that there was a stairway and that the top floor ran across the whole of the building, from north to south. You agreed with the suggestion of Mr Maxwell-Scott that if you'd known about that, together with the balconies, you could have advised a person to leave the bathroom, go into the lobby area, up the stairs, through the lounge area, out of the doorway, onto the east balcony and then make their way either to an exit or to a point of safety. You say that if you knew about that, you agreed that you could say that?

A. Yeah, generally I would, yeah.

Q. I'm just going to ask you this: from the position in which you were, standing outside the building, were you aware about what the smoke-logging was, what the condition of smoke within corridors and flats was on the 11th floor at that time?

A. I wasn't aware, no, of how extensive it was, no.

Q. Would the answer to that question, which Mr Maxwell-Scott asked, be affected by your knowledge of what the smoke conditions were in the flat, in the lobby, in the lounge area and up the stairs?
A. Yes. If there was no smoke within the flat and there was obviously smoke on the outside of the building, then at that time it may have been a better place to be.

Q. But obviously you would need to know about that before --

A. Yes, obviously I'd need that information to make that judgment.

Q. All right. Thank you very much.

THE CORONER: If you knew that there was smoke inside the flat, then the converse would be case?

A. That's correct, madam.

THE CORONER: Thank you. Members of the jury, do you have any questions?

Questions from the Jury

THE FOREMAN OF THE JURY: Thank you, madam coroner, we do have a couple. We were wondering, as you were moving around the site as you did, what channels of communication you had available or actually used to keep in touch with people such as the command unit and your colleagues such as Foster and Cartwright. Were you just using your personal radio, was it also speaking to people face to face, or were you employing runners as well?

A. During the incident I would have obviously used my radio to talk to officers and have face-to-face briefings and
situation reports, and also I would have sent officers
to ask for information, particularly from the
bridgehead, and then bring that back to me.

THE FOREMAN OF THE JURY: Do you recall who the runners were
in that case?
A. Sorry?

THE FOREMAN OF THE JURY: Do you recall who it was you were
sending to the bridgehead?
A. I recall that I specifically sent
Station Manager Cartwright to the bridgehead to get me
some information at one point.

THE FOREMAN OF THE JURY: Okay, thank you. Another question
from earlier today: you explained to us that a water
curtain, a covering jet, can be used on a fire to keep
things in check. We were wondering: is this a safer
thing to do when you know that there may be firefighters
or residents inside, in that you could employ it to keep
things in check when people weren't outside? Sorry,
I'll just ... (Pause) Sorry, could you employ it on the
fire that's in progress rather than, for instance, the
people?
A. You could, but you'd have to take great care to ensure
that those people weren't obviously put in jeopardy by
your action in terms of pushing the fire in their
direction or hitting them with the jet.
THE FOREMAN OF THE JURY: Okay, thank you. Our last question: we can see by the photographs -- and I imagine you observed the same -- that there'd been no sign of fire spread to the south wing of the block. Would the smoke-logged central staircase have been a key factor in preventing you from setting up either a bridgehead or a rescue point on the south instead of further down?

A. Sorry, could you repeat the question? I didn't quite hear that.

THE FOREMAN OF THE JURY: We can see by the photographs and from evidence we've actually heard that there was no fire on the south side of the building --

THE CORONER: Sorry, can I just stop you there. Do you mean the south side? We have two sides: the west and east.

THE FOREMAN OF THE JURY: Yes, madam, what I mean is that the flats that were on fire were in the north wing, so to speak, whereas we don't see any fire in the south wing.

I realise you weren't aware of fires or smoke-logging and where it might have occurred. Would it have been at all possible, in your opinion, to consider using the south side of the building as a point from which to set up a rescue point, or even a bridgehead?

A. That would have involved setting up a bridgehead in
a lobby, which would have been a dead end condition,
which accessed onto the stairwell, so that would have
been no safer than actually being in the stairwell
itself.

THE FOREMAN OF THE JURY:  Okay.  Thank you very much very
much.

THE CORONER:  Thank you, Mr Freeman.  Thank you very much
for coming and thank you very much for the evidence
which you've given to us.  You're welcome to stay if you
would like, but you're free to go if you would prefer.

Thank you very much.

A.  Thank you, madam.

THE CORONER:  Yes, Mr Atkins, I think you're going to deal
with the next witness.  Is that right?

MR MAXWELL-SCOTT:  That's correct.

THE CORONER:  Thank you.  Yes, the next witness is?

MR ATKINS:  Station Manager Guy Foster, madam.

THE CORONER:  Mr Foster, yes.  Thank you.

GUY FOSTER ( sworn)

THE CORONER:  Mr Foster, thank you very much.  Do sit down
and do help yourself to a glass of water.

A.  Thank you.

THE CORONER:  Please could you keep your voice up and speak
as closely to the microphone as you can so that we all
hear what you're saying.  If you direct your answers
across the room towards the members of the jury then
that might help them to hear you better and for you to
keep closer to the microphone. Thank you. Mr Atkins,
who is standing, is going to ask you questions on my
behalf initially and then there'll be questions from
others.

A. Thank you.

THE CORONER: Thank you.

Questions by MR ATKINS

MR ATKINS: Can you please tell the court your full name?

A. Yes. Guy Foster.

Q. Mr Foster, I'm going to be asking you some questions
about your knowledge of Lakanal House and your
involvement in the efforts to fight the fire there on
3 July 2009. Is it right that you were a station
manager at the time of the fire?

A. That's correct.

Q. For how long have you been employed by the London
Fire Brigade?

A. For about 20 years, 18 years.

Q. In what year did you become a station manager?

A. 1999.

Q. I think it's right that at the time of the fire you were
based at the headquarters in Union Street --

A. That's correct.
Q. -- as part of the fire safety regulations department in the fire engineering group?

A. That's correct, yes.

Q. Could you just explain for us in simple terms what that group does?

A. The fire engineering group is responsible -- and my role in particular was analysing the technical fire safety consultation work that was a statutory requirement of consultation between building controls, for instance, and the fire authority.

Q. How often would you attend operational incidents, then, when you were fulfilling that role?

A. Additional to the -- my day-to-day role, I still had an operational response -- responsibility. I was also a press liaison officer and a fire safety -- senior fire safety officer. I would probably attend half a dozen to a dozen incidents each month. Those would vary from various roles as either press liaison, fire safety, or as an operational commander.

THE CORONER: Mr Foster, could I just ask you not to speak too quickly because the typists are making a transcription and they need to be able to follow you. Please could you keep your voice up or move the microphone closer to you.

MR ATKINS: Had you ever been to Lakanal House before
3 July 2009?

A. No, I hadn't.

Q. If I ask you about policies and practices, unless I indicate to the contrary, my questions will be about how things were done either before the day of the fire or on the day of the fire.

A. That's understood, yes.

Q. Could I begin, please, by taking you to a number of documents which record accounts of what you have given of what happened on the day. The first one is at page 169 of the advocates' bundles. I wonder if Mr Foster could please be handed that in hard copy.

(Handed)

Mr Foster, you'll see there, at the top, in typed text, the words "PRC notes" and then an incident number. Could I begin, please, by asking you whether these are notes which you produced?

A. Yes, they are.

Q. Is it correct that they were produced before the performance review of command meeting which was held on 14 July 2009?

A. Yes, that's correct.

Q. Can you remember when exactly they were produced?

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

Q. But at any rate, then, within ten days of the fire?
A. Yes, correct.

Q. If I could ask you, then, please, to turn on to page 168. Forgive me, it's the page before, in fact, in the bundle. There's a diagram.

A. Yes.

Q. Is that a diagram that you drew?

A. That is, yes.

Q. Can I ask you when you drew it?

A. That was drawn at the same time as I made the PRC notes, the previous ones that you referred to.

Q. All right. We'll come back to that diagram in due course.

Could I show you then, please, page 1324 of the advocates' bundles. It will be handed to you in just a moment.

THE CORONER: Could you say the number again?

MR ATKINS: Forgive me, madam, 1324. (Handed)

If we look at the top of that page, we can see the letters "PRC," which is short for "performance review of command"?

A. Yes.

Q. And across, on the right-hand side, the date, 14 July 2009?

A. Yes, that's correct.

Q. Did you attend that meeting yourself --
A. I did.

Q. -- to provide information?

A. That's correct, yes.

Q. The notes we're looking at, though, were they taken by somebody else?

A. They were.

Q. Can you recall whether, at the time of the meeting, you were shown these notes?

A. Not at the time of the meeting, no.

Q. Does it follow, then, that you weren't able to suggest any corrections, for example?

A. That's correct, yes.

Q. Could Mr Foster then please be shown page 328 of the statements bundle. (Handed)

Mr Foster, we can see your name there at the top of the page. We see it's a witness statement completed on 16 July 2009. Do you recognise that as a statement that you gave?

A. Yes, I do, yes.

Q. Comparing the dates, then, this was two days after the PRC?

A. It appears to be, yes, yeah.

Q. Lastly, could I ask you, please, to turn on in that bundle to page 335.

A. Yes.
Q. Do you recognise that as a second statement that you gave, this time on 27 April 2010?
A. Yes, I do.

Q. So that was some eight or nine months after first of all the PRC and secondly the first statement that we looked at a moment ago?
A. That's correct, yes.

Q. In that case, I'd like to go on, please, to asking you about the events of the day. I'm conscious that at times during the day there will be more than one thing that was happening at a time. I, of course, can only ask you one question at a time and I can only ask you about one thing at a time, so if, as we go through, when I'm asking you questions, you think that things happened in a different order to the order that I'm putting to you, then please say so, and likewise if I'm asking you about things and you think that they happened simultaneously, please could you let us know.
A. Okay, yes.

Q. Beginning, then, with the time at which you were mobilised, when you were asked to attend the fire. We've heard already that you were based at the headquarters in Union Street. Is it correct that you received a pager message at about 16.38?
A. I believe that was about the time, yes.
Q. At the time you received the pager message, were you at the Union Street headquarters?

A. I believe I was making my way from the headquarters to the Sawyer Street car park.

Q. I'm sorry, I didn't catch that bit?

A. I believe I was going from headquarters to the Sawyer Street car park, where my car was parked.

Q. Is that car park at or very close to the headquarters?

A. Yes, very close.

Q. Did the pager message inform you that it was a fire on the 9th floor?

A. As far as I recall, yes.

Q. Is it right that you were told that you were being mobilised as the press officer?

A. That's right, yes.

Q. At the time you received that message, then, what were you expecting that your role would be?

A. Normally when we get paged as a -- what we call support functions, we would anticipate that on arrival we would be used for that function. However, on many occasions, it's important -- depending on what resources are required, the incident commander can then ask you to do other roles and then would request a -- in this example, a further press liaison officer.

Q. So to follow that up, you might be told that you were
going to be the press officer, and when you arrived you might be given a different job and in due course the incident commander asks someone else to come along to carry out the press officer's job?

A. Yes, that's right.

Q. Has it ever happened to you before, that you've been asked to attend as a press officer and then been given another role?

A. Yes, on a few occasions, that's correct.

Q. Were you aware of anybody else at headquarters being asked to attend at the same time that you were?

A. No.

Q. I think it's right that when you got on your way, you contacted brigade control to let them know that. I've just put on the screen page 477 of the advocates' bundles, which is a written record of a conversation which you had with one of the team at brigade control. We see at the top it says:

"Paging, paging."

Does that mean that conversation was conducted by written pager messages or was this a conversation that you had --

A. I'm not clear. I've not seen this before, so I'm not sure what that actually means there.

Q. I'm sorry, I should have said: is it right that your
call sign was OG51?

A. That's correct, yes.

Q. So where we see that on the left-hand side, that's what you were saying or writing, and then "JB" is one of the operators at brigade control. We can see that it begins with you saying:

"Hello, paging. OG51 [that's you] booking 6PF..."

Is that a six pump fire?

A. That's correct, yes.

Q. "... at Camberwell, Havil Street, press officer."

A. That's right, yes.

Q. Brigade control said:

"Sorry, okay, what do you want. Have you got the address?"

And you said:

"I've got the address. Any messages at all?"

A. That's correct.

Q. Brigade control said:

"Make pumps six. Hold on a second. We've also got a couple of operators talking to callers stuck in their flats on the 9th floor."

And you said:

"Okay, all right. No informatives at this stage, just the make up?"

And later on they said:
"No, just the make pumps six."

You then said:

"Right, if you show me status 2, I'll be on my way.

Thank you very much."

Does "status 2" mean mobilised?

A. Yes, that's correct.

Q. In other words, on your way?

A. Yes, that's right.

Q. What was the purpose of asking brigade control at that stage were there any messages had been received?

A. It's just from the -- when we take a pager message, to get an idea of what the current situation is. We're aware that by the time we arrive things may have changed, but it would also give some relevant information as to how dynamic the fire might be at that stage. So an indication of what was involved at that stage would be helpful.

Q. We don't have a record of the time at which you arrived at Lakanal House. Do you have any recollection of when it was?

A. I know I arrived shortly after Station Manager Cartwright, because as I left Sawyer Street car park, he was also leaving Sawyer Street car park. I was unaware that he was going to the same incident but consequently finding him on the fire ground
made me realise that I would have arrived shortly after Mr Cartwright.

Q. When you arrived at Lakanal House, where did you park?
A. I parked in -- I think it's Havil Street.

Q. What was the first thing that you did after you arrived?
A. On arrival, having parked the vehicle, I put on my PPE, my fire kit. I can't recall as to whether I radioed control to book in at that stage, but I put on my fire kit. I was then making my way to the control unit to confirm and to hand in my nominal roll board. I believe at that time I heard a member of the public walking past that sounded in a distressed state and I just asked if she was okay -- I recall it was a woman -- and just if there was any basic information, but she just informed me, as it says in my statement, that she had some pets that were in one of the flats at Lakanal House, I believe, and as I said in my statement, I just confirmed that we would do what we could and then continued to make my way to the command unit.

Q. When you reached the command unit, was the incident commander there?
A. No, he wasn't.

Q. From that position, were you able to see the building?
A. No.

Q. Did there come a point where you were able to see the
floods in the building around about the time of your
arrival?

A. Not at the time of arrival. Once I'd been to the
command unit and handed in my nominal roll board, I then
made my way -- sorry, I asked the command unit member of
staff if he knew where the incident commander was, and
he said he was somewhere at the front -- what he called
the front -- of Lakanal House, which I now know to be
the west side, and then I progressed my way down --
I think it's Dalwood Street towards Lakanal House. It
was only when I then got beyond Fontenelle House that
I became aware -- or able to see -- the extent of the
fire.

Q. What were you able to see?

A. Well, I initially -- I had to force my way through
a hedgerow, I believe it was, to go and see Mr Howling
and Mr Cartwright, who were standing on the lawns to the
west of Lakanal, and at that stage I could see that
there were more than one flat involved in the fire.

Q. Were you able to see whether the flats that were on fire
were all on the same floor or not?

A. No, it was clear that there was a fire at an upper
level, which I took to be the -- the top floor that we'd
been called to, and two other fires were showing at
a lower level, some -- which I now know to be the 5th
and the 7th floor.

Q. Could you see at that point whether the fire on the highest level -- you say the level you'd been called to, so that would be the 9th -- could you see whether that fire extended above the 9th floor or not?

A. It wasn't clear to me as to what floors that was at that stage.

Q. You mentioned a moment ago that you found Watch Manager Howling and Station Manager Cartwright together on the lawn. Was Group Manager Freeman there at the time you arrived?

A. No, he wasn't.

Q. At the point you arrived, which of the two of them was incident commander?

A. Again, I think at the moment I got there, Station Manager Cartwright confirmed that he was just taking over, or had taken over.

Q. That was something which he said to you?

A. Yes, correct.

Q. Did you explain that you had attended in your capacity as a press officer?

A. I did, yes.

Q. What instructions were you given?

A. I was told by Station Manager Cartwright that he didn't want to use me as the press liaison officer and that at
that stage the priority was to move the bridgehead from
the 7th floor to the 3rd floor, as the fire was now
showing at lower levels.

Q. Were you given a particular designation or a particular
role?

A. Yes, I was, I was given the role of fire sector, so
sector commander fire.

Q. Did you know whether, at that point, there were any
other sector commanders? For example, a sector
commander rescue?

A. No, not at that time. The only indication was that
the -- Mr Payton, as I now know, was the bridgehead
commander, and that's who I was to liaise with.

Q. Could you please just explain to the jury, then, at the
time that you were appointed sector commander fire, what
did you understand fell within your sector?

A. The role of sector commander fire at a high rise
incident would be really to take command of the
bridgehead and deal with the fires and potential search
and rescue within the fire sector.

Q. Would you be reporting directly to the incident
commander at that point?

A. I would, yes.

Q. Directly to Station Manager Cartwright?

A. That's correct, yes.
Q. At the point when you were given that instruction to go in and move the bridgehead, were you provided with any information about the layout of the building?
A. No, I wasn't.

Q. Were you told anything about the number of crew who were at the bridgehead, manning the bridgehead?
A. No, not at that stage.

Q. Save that you knew, as you mentioned, that Crew Manager Payton was in charge?
A. That's correct. Watch Manager Payton, I believe.

Q. Forgive me; Watch Manager Payton. You're quite right. Do you know how many crews were committed above the bridgehead at that time?
A. Not at that stage, no.

Q. Was any information given to you about the location of the different fires? For example, what flat numbers they were in?
A. No, the only indication was that we could see that the fire we believed to be on the 5th, the 7th and the 9th.

Q. Were you aware whether or not any searches had been carried out in any parts of the building?
A. No, not -- not at that time, no.

Q. Were you given any information about the locations of persons who were believed to be in the building?
A. Again, no.
Q. Or of intended rescue operations; that is an intention
to go to a particular flat?
A. No, not at all.
Q. Are you able to say how long the briefing that you were
given at that time lasted?
A. Not an exact time, but it was fairly short.
Q. Is it right that after the briefing you then went into
the building? Yes?
A. Oh, sorry, yes.
Q. At the time you went into the building, then, what was
your plan?
A. I clarified with Station Manager Cartwright exactly what
he wanted me to do, which was to move the bridgehead
from the -- or to ensure the bridgehead was being moved,
because I understood then that instructions had been
given over the radio, just to make sure it was two
floors below the floor in which the lowest fire was.
I asked or just confirmed if he could clarify or knew
where the entrance was to the lift lobby, which he
pointed me in the direction as to where the dry riser --
the hose going into the dry riser was, and at that stage
that's -- I was then handed the fire sector tabard from
a member of the command unit crew and then I made my way
across the lawn to the lift lobby.
Q. Did you go into the lift lobby?
A. I did, yes. That's correct.

Q. I'd like to just show you, please, two photographs. Do you recognise that as a photograph of the lift lobby area?

A. I do, yes.

Q. We can see the two lift shafts. Do you see on the back wall above them there's a sign on the wall?

A. I do, yes.

Q. If I just move onto the next photograph. It's a close-up of that sign. Do you recall seeing the sign at the time you went into the lift lobby?

A. No, I've no -- no recollection of seeing that sign at that time.

Q. Did you in fact use the lift to go up to the bridgehead?

A. No, I didn't. I pressed the button to call the lift. The lift door opened, but at that time on -- thinking about where the fire may be within the premises -- and also one of my earlier thoughts was that this may be as a result of some potential arson attack -- I felt it was safer not to use the lift. Additionally, it would be normal procedure with a firefighting lift to have a firefighter situated within the lift to operate the lift, and there was nobody else there.

I also recognised that should I get in the lift and I was on my own, and should the lift get stuck, that
could have a serious impact on the operational plan at that moment in time. So I chose to then go from there and find the staircase, which I now know is on the other side of the building.

Q. Just to clarify one point you've mentioned, was the reason that at that time you thought arson was a possibility that you had seen there were fires in different places in the building?

A. That's correct, and the fact that we'd been called to a fire on the 9th floor and that it was apparent that there was fire below, which is an extremely unprecedented, in my experience, scenario.

Q. You mentioned a moment ago that there was a radio message about the bridgehead moving. Do you recall whether that message was sent before you went into the building?

A. My recollection was that that message had already been sent by either Station Manager Cartwright or Watch Manager Howling, to request the bridgehead to be moved prior to my instruction to go and confirm that that was actually being undertaken.

Q. Madam, that would be a convenient moment to break?

THE CORONER: All right, thank you very much. We'll have a break there and be back for 1.55, please.

Members of the jury, go with Mr Graham, please.
Mr Foster, you're part way through giving your evidence, and the strict rule is that you must not talk to anyone about your evidence or indeed about this matter, so the safer option is for you to have lunch by yourself.

A. Thank you.

MR ATKINS: It might be helpful if the advocates could remain just for five minutes to discuss the timetable. Thank you very much.

THE CORONER: Thank you.

(12.54 pm)

(The short adjournment)

(1.55 pm)

THE CORONER: Yes, Mr Maxwell-Scott, shall we just run over some timetabling issues before we ask the jury to come in?

MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Very briefly, I was going to say that my proposal for today and tomorrow is to at least temporarily remove Firefighter Chapman from the list and decide at a later stage what course of action to take with him, to proceed, after Station Manager Foster, with Firefighter Baker, and if there's time, start Crew Manager Niblett. He's available tomorrow, and then tomorrow I propose the order be Niblett, Rose, Cox, Hull and Thorpe, with Firefighter Wendy Stevens to be read.
If there are any representations on that, I suggest we deal with those at the end of the day.

THE CORONER: All right. Well, that's very helpful.

MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Then overnight I will prepare a proposal in relation to the witnesses who form the current backlog.

THE CORONER: Yes, okay. That's very helpful. Any submissions at this stage? All right, thank you very much. That's very helpful. Yes, Mr Hendy.

MR HENDY: Just before you invite the jury, could I just have two seconds to go to the back of the hall? My watch has broken and I've lost a component from it. Just before the jury come through the door.

THE CORONER: Yes.

MR HENDY: Thank you very much. (Pause)

THE CORONER: No success?

MR HENDY: No luck, so far, madam.

THE CORONER: Mr Clark, I wonder whether perhaps you could ask one of the facilities people in the building whether they could be having a look. Thank you.

(In the presence of the Jury)

THE CORONER: Thank you. Yes, Mr Atkins.

MR ATKINS: Mr Foster, you'd just been explaining to the jury that you decided, in the event, not to use the lift.
A. That's correct.
Q. When you went up the stairs, how high up the building did you go?
A. I believed I went and met the -- Mr Payton on the 7th floor.
Q. Could I ask you about that in a little bit more detail, please, because in your first witness statement, which was the one you made in 2009, you referred to going up to the 3rd floor and meeting him there. I've just put that page on the screen. That's page 330.
A. That's correct, yes.
Q. Whereas in the statement that you made some time later in 2010, at page 337 -- we have the question and answer there at the top of the page:
"When you arrived at the 3rd floor bridgehead, what was your briefing from Watch Manager Payton?"
And you say:
"I can confirm that I went to the 7th floor, not, as I previously stated, to the 3rd floor."
So can you just help us, what is your recollection? Did you go to the 3rd floor, or did you go to the 7th?
A. I actually find that quite difficult to recall in its entirety. My first recollection was that it was around the 3rd but subsequently I was informed that I had actually gone to around the 7th, where the bridgehead
was being set up to be moved because they had received
some information to actually move the bridgehead down.
Q. When you arrived, were you, for example, passing people
on the stairs or meeting them on the stairs as they came
down, or did you reach the bridgehead at a position
where it was set up, waiting to be moved?
A. When I got to the bridgehead, it was just being
collected together to be moved, at that stage. I don't
recall passing anybody on the stairs.
Q. Do you recall on the stairs noticing any signs which
said which flats were on which floor? I'll just put
an example on the screen there. That's a sign which is
at the 1st floor. Then as you go up the building, there
are signs on the staircase like this one, on page 16.
Do you recall noticing signs like that?
A. I can't recall seeing those at the time, no.
Q. Could you please explain to the jury what is involved in
moving a bridgehead, what physically has to be done?
A. It's the first time that -- in my experience as a fire
officer that we've had to do that. In order to move
a bridgehead, because it's the centre of operations for
dealing with a fire in a high rise incident, it's
necessary to move the breathing apparatus control
facilities and remove any officers who are, at that
time, involved in other activities, such as bringing
equipment to the floor, carrying out any other
additional tasks in setting up the bridgehead and
carrying out, for instance, briefings to crews. You'd
have an incident commander -- sorry, I beg your pardon,
a bridgehead commander, who would be briefing crews at
that stage, so it would be a question of collecting all
those people together and removing them to the place of
relative safety at the -- in this instance, what had
been determined as the 3rd floor.

Q. So do we understand then that the crew who were manning
the bridgehead and you moved down to the 3rd floor?
A. That's correct, yes.

Q. Was that, in your view, a suitable location to set up
the bridgehead, as you found it?
A. No, it wasn't. Once I'd reached the 3rd floor, it was
obvious that there was smoke within the staircase, and
therefore because it's essential to set up breathing
apparatus operations in what we determine clear air --
i.e. not a smoke filled atmosphere -- it was therefore my
decision at that stage to move the bridgehead to a place
of -- where we could have clear air, which the sensible
location appeared to be outside the building. I would
state -- sorry, sir.

Q. Sorry, I just wanted to ask: you say that there was
smoke in the stairwell on the 3rd floor?
Q. Was it possible to vent the stairwell to clear the air there?

A. I made -- I visually checked to see what facilities were available to ventilate the stair in that location. This would have entailed normally perhaps opening lobby doors into the lift lobby, but noticing that the lift lobby was also full of smoke, at that stage, it wouldn't have been appropriate to do that. That caused me some confusion as to why there was smoke within the lift lobby at that level.

I believe at that stage also I had a conversation with a crew manager who informed me that they had made some attempt previously to my arrival, probably at a different level, to clear the smoke and ventilate the space, but it hadn't worked. I then made my way to the 4th floor briefly to see whether that would achieve the same, and it was apparent that it was -- two reasons that it was difficult: one is the structure of the doorways to actually do that, and secondly, there didn't appear to be a suitable way of -- of doing that, and I sensed -- sorry.

Q. Sorry, just to pause you there, can I just show you a picture of an even-numbered floor. They all had, at the time, doors like that, security doors.
A. That's correct.

Q. Is that the sort of door that you encountered on the 4th floor?

A. Yes.

Q. Were you able to open that door, or was there some other problem?

A. No, it wasn't easily openable, and I was conscious of the time element involved in then perhaps forcing this door, or forcing any other doors, as the priority had been to try and set the bridgehead up on the 3rd floor, but now conscious of the fact that that would need to be removed further, I was becoming concerned that this was potentially adding some delay into firefighting rescue operations and I made the decision not to -- I beg your pardon.

Q. Sorry, I interrupted.

A. So I made the decision that rather than spend excessive time trying to ventilate the space, it would be easier to go outside the building and set up the bridgehead outside of the building.

Q. By the sounds of it, that was your decision that you made to move outside the building?

A. It was indeed, yes.

Q. At the time you made that decision, were you able to communicate with the crews who were committed above the
bridgehead to tell them that the bridgehead had moved
and where it had moved to?

A. It's a matter of priority that should the bridgehead or
any scene of operations be required to be removed to
another location to where the breathing apparatus entry
control had been set up, that all crews are informed
that that's the situation in order that when they
retreat that they know where the new location will be.
I believe I had a conversation with -- with all the
officers that were in that location to say that we would
move it to the 3rd floor in the first instance, and then
at that stage, I believe it was a crew manager,
subsequently -- I believe it was Crew Manager Hider --
rang up the stairs to the crews on the upper -- that were
carrying out firefighting operations, because we were
having some communication problems, came back to me and
said: would I want the firefighting crew that was in the
9th floor flat to also withdraw? At that time, I said
to Crew Manager Hider not to do that, to leave those
people in fighting the fire, because the information
that Mr Hider gave me was that they considered that the
fire had nearly been extinguished on that level, and
I was comfortable that provided we had informed them
that the bridgehead had been moved, that they could
continue to do that.
Then at that stage we then --

THE CORONER: Sorry, Mr Foster, I'll just stop you there, because Mr Atkins wants to take you through step by step.

A. Sorry.

MR ATKINS: Sorry, I just wanted to ask you about the communication difficulties you mentioned. Ordinarily, you would hope to be in radio contact with those crews, would you?

A. That's correct, yes.

Q. What radio equipment would you use to contact them?

A. The communication with the breathing apparatus crew will be done through handheld radios on a separate communications channel, usually channel -- I beg your pardon -- and therefore my instruction would be to the BA entry control officer in order to pass that on.

Q. So it would be a two-stage process: you would ask the breathing apparatus entry control officer to pass on information, and then they would communicate it on to the crews above the bridgehead?

A. That's correct, yes.

Q. Was the difficulty that you experienced that you couldn't contact the entry control officer in the first instance, or that the officer couldn't contact the crews?
A. No, it was more that the officer couldn't contact the crews, I believe.

Q. Was that the reason, then, that Crew Manager Hider went up himself?

A. I believe so, yes.

Q. Could I ask you, please, about the implications of moving the bridgehead out of the building. First of all, is it right that there might be, as a result, a gap in firefighting once the crews who were already committed were withdrawn and until further crews were committed?

A. Potentially that's the case. On this occasion there was no break in -- in that, because Mr Hider had confirmed with me that they felt that they'd -- were bringing the fire under control, and I had actually specifically requested -- or required them to continue firefighting operations at that time.

Q. In other words, at the point that the bridgehead moved outside the building, firefighting was continuing?

A. Yes, that's correct.

Q. And in due course no doubt we will hear evidence from others -- and perhaps from yourself as well -- about when the next crews were committed into the building.

A. That's correct. I would say that is on that upper level at the 9th floor.
Q. It would also be the case, wouldn't it, that once the bridgehead had moved outside the building, any crews who were committed would have to travel further from the point where they activated their BA equipment to the point of the fighting the fire?

A. That's correct, yes.

Q. From the ground floor up to whatever floor it was?

A. Yes.

Q. And that therefore there would be more effort involved in moving equipment around and climbing up the stairs?

A. Yes, that's correct.

Q. We've heard evidence that in general one would try to set up a bridgehead two floors below the lowest fire floor. Does it follow then that ordinarily you would not choose to set up a bridgehead outside the building, except perhaps where the fire was on maybe the 1st or the 2nd floor?

A. That's correct, yes.

Q. Could I take you back, please, to your diagram. This is at page 168 of the advocates' bundles.

A. Okay, yes.

Q. This is the diagram you told us you prepared before the PRC, within about ten days of the day of the fire?

A. That's correct, yes.

Q. Do we understand, then, that it shows the position of
the bridgehead where you set it up on the east side of
the building?
A. Yes, that's correct.
Q. We can see that just in the middle of the page, with "SC
fire" next to it. Is that you, sector commander fire?
A. That's correct, yes.
Q. And BA entry control next to the bridgehead?
A. That's correct, yes.
Q. You've marked the stairs as the point of access to the
building?
A. That's right, yes.
Q. On the left-hand side there's a bubble with "BA
reserve". Can you just explain what that indicates?
A. Yes. When I drew this diagram, it was more of
a schematic just to inform the PRC of the approximations
of where I believed the equipment and staff -- the
firefighters to be at the time when I moved the
bridgehead out of the building.
Q. Is the BA reserve the area roughly where crews were
waiting to be committed?
A. That's very approximately, yes.
Q. Then we can see just down to the right of the
bridgehead, slightly obscured, the words "equipment
dump". Could you just explain what that was for?
A. That was set up for things like hose lines, branches,
lines, first aid equipment, to be placed in one area.

When crews are making entry, there's a short time then
between a BA crew being tasked with something to do
where they could collect necessary equipment based on
the instructions and the plan in the brief that they
were being given.

Q. This was equipment, then, that was ready for use, rather
than equipment which was used and spent?
A. Correct, yes.

THE CORONER: Before we move on from that, we've heard of
an area where BA sets were being recharged or prepared
for use. Where would that have been on your sketch?
A. I'm not clear where that would have been, madam.

THE CORONER: Right, okay.

MR ATKINS: Thinking for a moment about the position of the
bridgehead, I've just put on the screen photograph
number 2 in tab 14. You can see there's a tree there in
the middle of the page. Was that roughly where the
bridgehead was?
A. Yes, that's correct, yeah.

Q. We've seen already from your diagram that you were
stationed next to the bridgehead.
A. That's correct, yes.

Q. Were you able to see the upper part of the building from
where you were?
A. No, I wasn't, no.

Q. When the bridgehead was set up outside the building, was Watch Manager Payton still the entry control officer?

A. Watch Manager Payton, when he came outside the building, because he would have been originally the bridgehead commander, I instructed him to take on the role of BA entry -- or supervising BA entry control procedures, in order that there was a high level of control on that at that stage.

Q. Was Watch Manager Howling working with you at that time?

A. Slightly later, I believe, he was given the role of stage 2 BA supervision.

Q. Could you just explain for us, please, what that is.

A. That's primarily because of the amount of breathing apparatus what we were committing and likely to be have to commit, it's a procedure where it just gives an additional level of control over the BA resources that are likely to be used at an incident of this type.

Q. Is that of the nature of keeping track of crews and who's been committed? Is it that sort of role?

A. Not specifically. As I understood, Mr Howling's role at that stage was just to supervise the numbers of BA that we had available to use and supervise the basic entry procedures were being adhered to.

Q. If somebody wanted to identify you when you were
standing outside the building carrying out that role,
was there something about your uniform that would have
identified you? You mentioned earlier a tabard?
A. Yes, that's correct.
Q. Would you just describe that for us?
A. Yes, I think if you were to put up the previous
photographs, those tabards that some of those officers
are wearing that they have specific designations written
on the rear, and mine would have said "fire sector" or
"sector fire".
Q. Are we talking about these jackets?
A. Very similar, yes.
Q. Something like that?
A. Yes.
Q. With wording on the back?
A. That's correct, yes.
Q. What about Watch Manager Payton? Would he have had any
identifying uniform or features?
A. He would have had a BA entry control tabard. I don't
know whether he wore that at that time, because we were
anxious to get BA crews back into the building.
Q. Do you recall, once you had set up the bridgehead
outside the building, being briefed by
Group Manager Freeman, who was then the incident
commander?
A. I don't have a very clear recollection of the briefing. I do remember Group Manager Freeman coming to me and asking for an update of what actions I'd taken prior to his arrival.

Q. Can you remember what information you gave him about those actions?

A. I think at that stage I'd committed three BA crews consisting of three persons in each crew, one to the 5th, one to the 7th and one to the 9th floor, to carry out the task of beginning firefighting on the 5th and the 7th, and to support the crew that was already and had remained on the 9th floor to extinguish the fire that I believe was still on the 9th floor.

Q. To the best of your recollection, were those crews which you had committed after the bridgehead had come outside the building or were they crews that had already been committed before the bridgehead came outside?

A. No, I do have a very clear recollection of that task. They were crews I committed once we had the BA -- sorry, the bridgehead outside of the building. It was a very specific point in time.

Q. Can you recall whether Group Manager Freeman discussed with you his operational priorities?

A. I can't -- I don't have a clear recollection of that, other than it was to continue firefighting and -- and
concentrate on that activity, but I can't remember a specific brief.

Q. Are you able to remember how long your conversation with Group Manager Freeman lasted?

A. At that time, probably two or three minutes. It's fair to say that we were receiving an awful lot of information on actions that needed to be taken in respect of firefighting at that stage.

Q. On that subject, do you recall while you were speaking to Group Manager Freeman a firefighter approaching and passing on information that there were persons trapped, most significantly in flat 81, and that smoke was entering that flat? Do you remember that?

A. I don't specifically remember that moment in time. I do remember very vividly receiving information at some point -- and I cannot recall if it was when Mr Freeman was there -- that there were people trapped in flat 81, five persons believed in the bathroom of flat 81.

Q. Were you aware that a group from New Cross with standard duration breathing apparatus had gone into the building at around about 5.06 or 5.07 in order to go up to the 11th or 12th floor?

A. No, I have no recollection of that.

Q. Do you think that that is a crew which you committed, or might they have gone into the building by some other
route?

A. They -- they may have gone in by some other route. I do recall a crew -- my recollection is that it was a little bit later on in time -- that was passing along a pathway in front of the bridgehead from my right-hand side, already in breathing apparatus and what we called don -- they had don and start up, so they were under air at that stage, walking along the path, and I was slightly concerned at that stage that they'd been committed from another point, but I just asked for some clarification from them at that stage and I believe at that point I was informed that there was another search -- or there was a search sector, or a rescue sector now underway.

Q. Pausing there, then, the crew that you mentioned seeing walking along under air, are you able to say whether or not that was the New Cross crew?

A. I'm afraid I'm not, no.

Q. All right, perhaps we'll leave that there. Do you know who briefed the New Cross crew, if you didn't?

A. No, I don't, I'm afraid.

Q. Are you aware of that instruction being given to them that they ought also to go to flat 56 to help somebody there?

A. No, not -- not -- because as I say, I don't know whether the crew that I saw walking along that path was from New
Q. Did you, at any stage, either send or hear a radio message giving the order that all crews should withdraw with the exception of New Cross?

A. No, I have no recollection -- excuse me, I have no recollection of hearing that message or that message being transmitted.

Q. When the bridgehead first moved outside and you were considering how crews should best be committed, did you make efforts at that stage to establish the layout of the building?

A. The scene at the time was very busy. It wasn't easy to ascertain the layout of the building. My -- my concern was that we needed to get breathing apparatus crews in there with firefighting equipment to start to bring the fires under control on the 5th and 7th floor, and once we -- my view was once we had achieved that, more time would have been available to look into more detail. However, because of the dynamic nature of this incident, there were other interjects at the time which made that very difficult to achieve.

Q. Did you have a clear idea in your own mind of what crews had already done in the building?

A. I had spoken to Watch Manager Payton and clarified that they had been dealing with the fire in flat 65, which
was the original flat that they were called to, and
firefighting operations had continued in that area, and
there was the limit of the briefing I had from
Watch Manager Payton.

Q. Did you know, for example, which parts of the building
had already been searched?
A. I didn't, no.

Q. Did you make any inquiries of Watch Manager Payton or of
any of the other firefighters about that?
A. Not at that stage. As I said, the priority was
initially to move the bridgehead, to get crews into
a safe air condition, and then to commit crews to carry
out the firefighting, and that took a certain amount of
time in order to achieve. I was also very conscious of
the fact that having committed nine breathing apparatus
wearers, we needed three in a -- a minimum of three in
reserve, because each crew was a crew of three, and
I was asking at that stage for further BA resources, and
that was my priority at that stage, in order that we had
sufficient resources to then build on the plan at that
stage.

Q. Thinking about building up a plan, could I ask you
please about sources of information that might have been
available to you about people who were inside the
building or trapped inside the building. Were you
receiving information from any of the crews who had been committed and who were coming out of the building?

A. I hadn't received any information at that time about what had been achieved. I'd asked Watch Manager Payton to look after BA entry control. The normal procedure would be that could be achievable, it would be fairly straightforward to do. However, under this dynamic and escalating incident, it was becoming increasingly difficult to ascertain where crews had been at that stage.

Q. Did Watch Manager Payton ever pass on to you a list that he had been given earlier in the incident?

A. No, he didn't, no.

Q. Did you receive any information about flats where there might be people still in the building from the command unit?

A. I can't remember whether it was from the command unit, but I think I say -- stated in my statement that at some point there were two issues. One was the information about flat 81 which we referred to already, and then later a list of, I believe, five or six flats was given directly to me, and it's been difficult to identify who did that. It had a list of flat numbers on there.

THE CORONER: Just stop there, because we'll probably get to that. Just let Mr Atkins take you through.
MR ATKINS: By the sounds of it then, there were two occasions when you were provided with information about flats: first of all, the one that you mentioned earlier where you became aware of flat 81, and then subsequently a list that was produced of more than one flat number, but you're not able to tell us exactly who that came from.

A. No, no, I'm not.

Q. When you first became aware of flat 81, if that was the earlier of those two occasions, what was your response at that time? What was the first thing you did in reaction to that?

A. I believe at that stage Group Manager Freeman was with me at the time. I wanted to commit breathing apparatus crews to go immediately to that flat. A decision was made to use the EDBA, extended duration breathing apparatus crews --

Q. Sorry, to pause you there, you wanted so send a team in and you wanted it to be the extended duration breathing apparatus team. Why was that?

A. Because of the distance between the bridgehead and the 11th floor and the amount of air that they'd be required to use in entering the building and just making their way to the 11th floor. Therefore extended duration
breathing apparatus would give them that opportunity to
carry out that task for longer than a standard duration
breathing apparatus. I would say that was in
conjunction with Group Manager Freeman, to use the EDBA
crews as well, because it has to be an incident command
decision at that stage.

Q. The EDBA crew that was committed, were they committed at
the same time as the ambulance service's HART team?
A. I believe that that was the case, because I had
   a conversation with Mr Freeman about that issue.
Q. So we understand, the ambulance service's HART team also
   use extended duration breathing apparatus?
A. I believe that's the case, yes.
Q. Are you able to give us an impression of how long it
   might have been between you becoming aware of flat 81
   and the crew entering the building to go up to the 11th
   floor?
A. It wasn't a very long period of time. It took a period
   of time to brief the crew with specific tasks --
   probably two to three minutes to brief them -- and then
   they were required to obviously put their sets on fully
   and then there was -- we were waiting for the HART team
   just to get themselves prepared as well. So probably
   four, five, six minutes maximum to actually get them to
   start making their way to the building.
Q. At the time you were briefing that crew to go into the building to the 11th floor --
A. That's correct, yes.
Q. -- did you know whether or not there was a fire on the 11th floor?
A. It wasn't clear to me at that stage that there was also a fire on that floor, no.
Q. Could I ask you, please, for example, to turn to the jury bundle, tab 12, and go to page 26. (Handed)
A. 26.
Q. This is a photograph taken of the north end of the building. You can see there a quantity of smoke coming out of the upper part of the building.
Likewise, over the page, page 27, that's a slightly clearer photograph, again of the north end of the building, with smoke coming out of the vent at the end of the corridor --
A. That's correct.
Q. -- on the 11th floor.
A. Yes.
Q. As we understand it, the first of the extended duration breathing apparatus crews to be committed was a crew from Lewisham who were committed just after 5.30. Are you able to say, looking at these two photographs that come a few minutes before that, why it is you weren't
A. Yes, I think if you -- if you look where that fire is coming out of the north end and then relate that to where the bridgehead was on the east side of the building, towards the centre of Lakanal House, at a position which was -- the view was slightly obstructed by the tree, then I wouldn't have necessarily -- I would have had a visual on the state of the fire at that stage. I would reiterate or point out that it would be normal on a bridgehead in a high rise scenario not necessarily to be fully aware of any external fire spread because the bridgehead would be inside the building, and therefore you wouldn't necessarily know the conditions at that stage.

Q. So if the bridgehead were inside the building, as would normally be in the case, in fact you would have, standing at the bridgehead, an even less good vantage point than you did from your position under the tree outside the building?

A. Potentially that's correct, yes.

Q. In that case, then, were there any arrangements to pass information to you about what could be seen from the outside of the building, what the conditions were likely to be in --
A. Normal procedure, as I understand it, is that you would have a spotter, somebody who would be on the external part of the premises to pass information to the bridgehead, but with the amount of radio traffic that was underway at this stage, sometimes it's actually very difficult to get that information to the bridgehead.

Q. Did you have anybody performing that sort of spotter role for you?

A. I don't specifically remember anybody being designated that.

Q. When did you first become aware that there was a fire on the 11th floor?

A. I think when we committed the EDBA crews and we got information back at one point -- because we were constantly radioing them saying it's flat 81 on the 11th floor, and at some point we got a radio message back saying, "We can't identify flat 81 because the numbers to the flat doors have been burnt off." I think at that point my concern was that the fire was actually up on the 11th floor.

Q. We gather from that that the crew that you sent up had attempted to reach flat 81 on the 11th floor by going down the main central corridor to where the front doors were, because as you say, they reported that the front door numbers had been burned off. Were you aware at
that time that the New Cross crew who had been committed
earlier had managed to gain access to the 12th floor
balconies?
A. No.
Q. Were you aware that it was possible to gain access to
the flats that had their front doors on the 11th floor
from the balconies on the 12th?
A. No, I wasn't, no.
Q. Do you think you ever became aware of that fact during
the incident?
A. Not till much later in the incident.
Q. You told us as well about a list of flat numbers,
I think, that you were given at a time after the time
when you learned about flat 81.
A. Yes, that's correct.
Q. What did you do with that list?
A. My recollection of that was that because of the urgency
of the message that we received, that these people were
trapped and required rescuing, was to say to
Watch Manager Payton: "Allocate teams of two BA wearers
to each of these flats." I would brief two of those
crews, he would brief three, and we would require them
to carry out what we would term as a snatch rescue,
which is actually just going into the premises and going
specifically to those flats with the intention of
carrying out a rescue immediately. I did also ask them
to take with them, I believe, at that stage, some
firefighting equipment should they deem it necessary to
use, but the priority was to get to those flats.

Q. The jury have already heard evidence about a crew of
two, Firefighter Gray and Crew Manager Thomas, who were
committed to the building at 17.22 and went up to flat
49 on the 7th floor to rescue somebody who'd been
identified as being in a particular flat.

A. Right.

Q. Is that the sort of rescue that you mean by a snatch
rescue?

A. Yes, yes.

Q. When crews were briefed using the list to go to
a particular flat number to carry out that sort of
a risk, how were the crews expected to find out where
the flat in question was?

A. That was -- that was difficult, because we were only
given the floor -- I'm sorry, I beg your pardon, we were
only given flat numbers and not floor numbers, and
I can't recall given any specific direction as to that.
I just said we need -- "You need to be able to find
where those are."

Q. I think it's right that at one point while you were
outside the building you were approached by
a firefighter who was asking for advice about an aerial
ladder platform and what use it could be put to?

A. That's correct.

Q. Can you remember whether you gave any advice?

A. The aerial ladder platform operator came up to me whilst
I was trying to carry out my duties at the bridgehead
and asked if I felt it was appropriate to pitch the
aerial ladder platform to try to tackle the fires which
was now showing on the east side of the premises,
I think about the 5th floor level. I advised him that
I wasn't the incident commander, because that's
an incident commander decision on that, and that he
should seek advice from the incident commander.

However, in my opinion -- and I believe I said this to
him -- I felt if he could achieve something by
extinguishing the fire or suppressing the fire, he
should try to do so, but he did need to go through the
incident commander for that.

Q. So you were able to give him a possibility of a sensible
way forward, but you reminded him that any decision
would have to go through somebody who was part of the
incident command structure?

A. That's correct.

Q. Is it possible that in fact you directed him not to the
incident commander but to Group Manager Freeman, who at
that point was the operations commander?

A. I know I directed him to -- I said the words "incident commander". Yeah, I don't think at that stage I was aware that Mr Freeman was ops commander, but I did ask him to speak to the incident commander. I think Mr Freeman this morning gave some evidence about the dangers and risks of actually using that under those circumstances, which is why it has to go through the incident commander.

Q. Did there come a point later on in the day when the bridgehead was reestablished on the 3rd floor of the building?

A. That's correct, yes.

Q. I believe that one of the officers who was involved in that was Group Manager Andrews?

A. That's right, yes.

Q. What was his part in that?

A. Group Manager Andrews initially approached me, and I believe at that stage he was sector commander safety. He asked me some brief details about the building, any hazards and risks at that stage. He made a comment about whether he felt -- whether there was just one staircase in the building. I informed him that it was my opinion -- or my view that there appeared to be only one staircase. He then continued his duties but then he
returned back later and asked a question as to why the bridgehead was outside.

Q. Did you explain to him why it was that the bridgehead had come out in the first place?
A. I did indeed.

Q. Did he then investigate whether the conditions inside the building were still as they had been?
A. That's correct. He said to me he would go back into the building and he would have a look, because having explained to him that the staircase had been compromised and was smoked-logged down to the 3rd/4th floor level, he said he would go back into the building and see whether it was suitable to put the bridgehead back into the building, which he did do.

Q. He formed the view that it was; is that right?
A. That's correct. He came back telling me that he felt it was suitable.

Q. Once the bridgehead was moved back into the building to the 3rd floor, did you then become sector commander lobby outside the building?
A. That's correct. I did, yes.

Q. And then you, from that point onwards, remained in contact with the bridgehead on the 3rd floor?
A. Correct.

Q. Could I ask you, please, about something that you say in
your first statement, where you explain that in your view, to use your word, the fire was unique. You give three reasons for that. We can see them on this page, page 334.

A. Yes.

Q. You refer to three reasons: first of all the fire spread, secondly the smoke-logging, and thirdly the number of people who were trapped and needed rescuing. Could you just explain to us very briefly, in simple terms, what it was that was unusual in each of those three respects about this fire.

A. Yes, I can. The -- it's very unusual to experience fire spread downwards under any circumstances. I think I stated earlier on that that was my first impression when I arrived, that I believed that this might be a deliberate act because of the nature and the fact that it's so unusual to see this happening, and I certainly hadn't experienced that before in this kind of premises.

Q. What about the question of smoke-logging? What was unusual about that?

A. Normally we would -- we would anticipate that where we set the bridgehead up in the staircase you may get some smoke coming from the floor of origin, coming into the staircase because of the breach using the hose lines. However, it was evident that smoke wasn't just coming
There was smoke coming in at other levels, and I think I indicated earlier on that looking into the lobby where the lift was, because the building is ventilated in the lobby by open grills, that smoke seemed to be recirculating and coming into the lift lobby, which would normally also be an area where we could set up the bridgehead, in that area.

So it was unusual in that sense, that we seemed to be getting more extensive smoke-logging in a staircase over what was really the whole height of the building.

Q. Lastly, you mentioned the number of people who were trapped and needed rescuing. Was that unusually high in your experience?

A. In my experience, absolutely. It was high. Normally we would expect within this type of premises that the fire compartment is a 60-minute fire compartment, and that the fire could be extinguished within that fire compartment without undue risk to members of the public in adjoining flats. We do get occasions when that occurs. You have to appreciate that when we start firefighting and the fire hose has to go up from the bridgehead -- or from the landing valves to carry out the firefighting and we breach the front door of a flat, then smoke and heat will go out into the corridor, which
is why it's usually important, if people haven't already taken themselves off the floor where the fire is, that they stay within their flat, because it's likely that the corridor, whilst we're firefighting, will be full of heat and smoke whilst we carry out the firefighting. But that is usual. The unusual bit --

Q. Sorry, pausing there. Ordinarily, putting it more shortly, you're saying that people would stay in their flats because of this idea of compartments --

A. Correct.

Q. -- that would contain the fire?

A. Correct, yes.

Q. Whereas in this flat there was a need, was there, for people to leave the building?

A. There seemed to be some unusual, unexpected fire spread within the premises. As I said, it was on the 7th and the 5th, which was unusual, which gave more cause for concern because we needed to extinguish the fires before we could effectively rescue some of those persons.

Q. Could I ask you, then, please, about the knowledge that you gained of certain features of the layout of Lakanal House whilst you were carrying out your role as sector commander fire and afterwards. First of all, the single central staircase. When were you first sure that there was just one staircase in the building?
A. Fairly early on. From -- looking from the outside of
the building, to me it was fairly obvious where the
staircase was, because of the -- the visual impact of
the building, the fact that you could see the grills and
you could see the staircase windows. I was fairly
certain very early on that it was a single staircase
building, which is not unusual for residential.

Q. Were you aware that there were central corridors with
front doors only on the odd-numbered floors?

A. No, not at that time.

Q. Did you become aware of that during the day?

A. Much later on in the day, I think, when I had the
opportunity to go in the building.

Q. Can you remember whether that was before or after the
bridgehead went back into the building?

A. That was after the bridgehead went back into the
building.

Q. Were you aware that the flats in the building were
maisonettes?

A. Not for quite -- quite some time.

Q. Again, can you remember when it was that you found out
they were maisonettes?

A. I don't have a clear recollection of specific times.

I believe -- because when Mr Payton informed me that the
fire was out on the 9th, there was some talk on the
10th, and I started to get some impression that that was the case, that they might be maisonettes, but it wasn't clear to me that every flat was a maisonette.

Q. Similarly, were you aware that all the flats had essentially the same layout inside?

A. Sorry, could you repeat that?

Q. Did you realise that all of the flats had the same internal layout?

A. No, I didn't.

Q. Or that on the upper floor of each flat, the flat touched both sides of the building?

A. No, I wasn't aware.

Q. Were you aware that the balconies that were visible on both sides of the building were fire escape routes?

A. Not -- not all the time that I was bridgehead commander, no.

Q. Did you build up a sense of where in the building particular flats were? I'll show you what I mean. The diagram that I've just puts on the screen is a view of the west side of the building. So we can see on the right-hand side an indication of which floor is which, but not where any particular flat is. I can overlay on top of that the numbers of the particular flats so you can see where each one is. During the day, did you build up a mental picture along those lines of where the
A. No, not at all.

Q. Mr Foster, my final question is this: what single additional thing do you think could have helped you most, on the day of the fire, to carry out your duties?

A. I think those last two pictures that you've -- you've put up there, the schematic of the building and certainly the -- this second building -- second picture that's shown there would have helped immensely, just in determining exactly where flats were and some idea of the layout of the flats would have been useful. So some form of plans for the premises would have made the command at the bridgehead somewhat easier.

Q. Mr Foster, thank you. Those are the questions I have for you. There may be some questions from others.

A. Thank you.

THE CORONER: Mr Hendy.

Questions by MR HENDY

MR HENDY: Mr Foster, my name's Hendy. I represent some of the bereaved families. Just a few questions. You explained that you didn't realise that the fire had spread to the 11th floor. I wonder if you could just look at your first statement at page 329. In the third paragraph you -- this is just when you've arrived at the fire scene:
"I walked towards Lakanal House down Dalwood Street. At first, my view was blocked by Fontenelle House and I could only see smoke at a higher level. As I drew level with the edge of Fontenelle House, I could see the west side of Lakanal House over the top of a hedge that ran parallel with Dalwood Street. I could see three separate fires in Lakanal House. There was a larger fire in a flat on the 9th floor that was spreading to the 10th and 11th floor."

Then you describe the fires on the 7th and the 5th floors.

So you were aware that there that the fire had reached the 11th floor when you first arrived, yes?

A. I think I corrected that in my second statement. I think the -- the picture that I had in my mind at the time of the -- standing with Mr Howling and Mr Cartwright, it was very difficult to count the numbers of floors, and I think post-incident it was easier to see where those fires had been.

Q. Let's just see. You arrived, I think, shortly after Mr Cartwright, and Mr Cartwright, I think, told us that he arrived at 16.43. So you would have arrived at about 4.45, something like that?

A. I -- I believe it was slightly later than that, but only approximately five -- five or ten minutes.
Q. Let's say shortly before 5 o'clock then.
A. Yes.

Q. If we could just look at some photographs, then, to see what the photographer saw at approximately these times. Could we start with the jury bundle at tab 12, page 7.
A. Yes.

Q. This is just before 4.40, so a little bit before you arrived. We have the block there other than the ground floor. You can count the floors up alternately. The balconies are the even numbers, the ones without are the odd numbers. So 1, 3, 5, 7 -- sorry. If you look, the top floor is the 13th, then you have the 11th with currently some flame on it, and then, below that, you have the 9th, which you can just see has been damaged by fire. Just keep that in mind, and then go, please, to page 15.
A. Sorry, page 15?

Q. 15, yes. Now we can see the top of the ground floor level, on which, of course, there are no flats or maisonettes, and we can see that the fire's now just caught the 5th floor, and we can see now the 9th floor burnt out and then, above it, the 11th floor, which has flames visible, yes?
A. Yes.

Q. So this is just before 4.50?
Q. Then if we can go to just two more photographs. At 16, we can see water being sprayed on the 5th floor fire, which is showing flame. You can see smoke coming from the 7th floor, the burnt out 9th floor and flames on the 11th floor. At page 18 -- I've left aside the close-ups. At 18, which is now 4.51, there can be no doubt that the 11th floor is well and truly burnt out; is that right?

A. Yes, looking at this photograph now, yes, correct.

Q. Yes, you can see the fires on the 5th, 7th, 9th and 11th floors?

A. Yes.

Q. So with that to assist you, and assuming those times are right, it would have been clear to you on your arrival, looking at the west side of the building, that the fire had reached the 11th floor?

A. I don't -- I don't think, as I've stated earlier on, it was clear to me at that moment in time. One of the reasons for that was the briefing that I was being given by Station Manager Cartwright was about the urgent removal of the bridgehead to a lower level. So I didn't have the time to count the floors, as we -- looking at the photograph at the moment, you have the opportunity to count the floors, and unfortunately at the time the
priority was to move the bridgehead so we could continue firefighting, so I don't think it was clear to me at that stage that that was the 11th floor.

Q. Right. So your tasks were of such urgency that, quite understandably, you didn't have the time to take in the full extent of the fire scene?

A. I think that's fair to say, yes, correct.

Q. If we look at page 331 in your witness statement. This is after the bridgehead has been withdrawn to the ground level is. At the top of 331, you say you set up the bridgehead on the east side of the building, and then in the second paragraph, you say:

"Outside from the bridgehead, I sent in three crews of three in BA to the 5th, 7th and 9th floors of the building with hoses and branches to assist fighting the fire in these locations."

The question I wanted to ask you, but which is now clear, is: why not send a crew to the 11th floor? And the answer is: because you didn't appreciate at that time that there was fire on the 11th floor?

A. That's correct, absolutely, yes.

Q. Just a couple more points. Could you go to page 333.

This is now in your second witness statement.

A. Yes.

Q. On page 337, you deal in the top part of the page with
your going to the 7th floor bridgehead -- this is before you took it down to ground level -- and you met Watch Manager Payton there, and he told you they were making good progress attacking the 9th floor fire. Then the second question you were asked is:

"What was your understanding of the fire spread to the floor above?"

Answer:

"I thought it was the floor above. I didn't know at that point they were maisonettes. He confirmed at that time that all people from the flat of origin were accounted for."

Did he say anything about people in flats above the 9th floor?

A. No, he didn't.

Q. Did he say anything to you about having a list of flats in which people said they were trapped, which had been reported by control?

A. No, there was no information passed to me for that.

Q. Over the page at 338, at the top of the page, the first question that's put to you on that page is:

"When you met Watch Manager Payton, were you made aware of any flat numbers or a list of flats as a priority?"

Your answer was:
"No, the only flat that was mentioned was the flat which we had been called to, flat 65."

Is the jury to understand from that that Mr Payton himself referred only to flat 65 or that that was in everybody's minds anyway and he didn't need to mention it?

A. I believe Mr Payton did just state that it was flat 65 involved.

Q. If you look at page 340, please, the third question that you were asked on that page is:

"Between the bridgehead being set up on the ground floor and the information regarding flat 81, what was your understanding of the extent of the fire at this point and what was your plan?"

You say your understanding was you had fires on the 7th and 5th floors and that was based on the information from Brixton's crew manager. The fire on the 9th floor was under control:

"It was my plan to send crews to fight the fires on the 5th and 7th floors and to support the firefighting in the 9th floor."

Then you say:

"There was no information of people requiring rescue so the focus was on firefighting."

So at this stage, at the ground floor, until you
heard about flat 81, you had no idea that there was anybody requiring rescue in that block?

A. That's correct, yes.

Q. When you did find out about flat 81, you and General Manager Freeman got some five extended duration breathing apparatus wearers ready and a HART crew and sent them into action in something between four and six minutes?

A. That's correct.

Q. Is that right?

A. Yes.

THE CORONER: Was it five BA wearers or five crews?

A. Sorry, could you repeat that?

THE CORONER: Was it five BA wearers or five crews?

A. Five BA wearers.

MR HENDY: A crew of five?

A. A crew of five, yes.

Q. Thank you very much.

A. Thank you.

Questions by MR DOWDEN

MR DOWDEN: My name's Dowden. I represent Mr Francisquini. You told us that when you arrived you were aware of the unusual spread of fire in the building. Given that, did you think to ask people who'd been there before you as to whether they had any thoughts as to how the fire was
spreading?

A. Not at that stage, no. The priority was just to try and get the crews recommitted to firefight on the 5th and the 7th and that was my priority and concern.

Q. You also said that you were given flat numbers but not floors for flats. Did you think to ask whether anybody had any information as to which floors these flats were on?

A. Unfortunately, when the piece of paper was passed to me with the flat numbers on, whoever it was that passed that to me I couldn't relocate, so we didn't get the opportunity to ask, and I felt that rather than delaying the crews being committed, I wanted to make sure that we got the crews in there and they would be able to find those specific flats, and if we should find out in due course that they were specific floors, we would have been able to inform them via the BA entry control radio system.

Q. But you were able to ask, were you not, other officers around you whether they themselves had any knowledge of the building and its layout, and that's some information which you could relay to the crews going in?

A. It was a possibility but it was a very, very dynamic situation at that moment in time. We'd just committed the crew to flat 81, and then we had a list of five
flats and as a matter of priority I wanted to make sure that we actioned that and got people in to deal with those specific tasks.

Q. Thank you.

THE CORONER: Ms Al Tai?

MS AL TAI: No thank you.

THE CORONER: Mr Walsh?

MR WALSH: No thank you, madam.

THE CORONER: Members of the jury, any questions?

Questions by the Jury

THE FOREMAN OF THE JURY: Thank you, madam coroner, we just have the one.

Our question is: when you were tasked to move the bridgehead from the 7th floor downwards to the BA crew, we're aware that Crew Manager Hider was physically sent to the 9th floor to notify the crews of the move. We were just wondering if you had confirmation that that had actually taken place, that he had actually managed to communicate that to the crews?

A. Yes, yes, because when Mr Hider came back to me, he specifically said he had spoken to the crews, they had informed him that they felt that the fire was already out and did I want them also removed at that stage, and that's when I said to them: no, leave them in the flat, put the fire out, but we would send another crew up when
1 we had resited the bridgehead.
2 THE FOREMAN OF THE JURY: Thank you.
3 Questions by the Coroner
4 THE CORONER: Thank you very much.
5 Mr Foster, you've explained to us that your
6 immediate thought, or an early thought, was that this
7 might have been a deliberately started fire, and one can
8 quite understand why that went through your mind, but
9 just so that we put this point to rest, there's nothing
10 which has suggested to you at any later stage that there
11 was any deliberate act involved?
12 A. No, that's correct.
13 THE CORONER: No, thank you. That's my understanding.
14 So, members of the jury, that's something that you
15 can put out of your minds. We're not looking at any
16 deliberate act to start the fire. Thank you very much.
17 Yes, thank you very much, Mr Foster. Thank you for
18 coming and thank you for the help that you've given us.
19 You're welcome to stay if you want, but you're free to
20 go if you would prefer.
21 A. Thank you, madam.
22 THE CORONER: Thank you.
23 (The witness withdrew)
24 THE CORONER: Yes, thank you, Mr Atkins.
25 MR ATKINS: Madam, I don't know whether you would like the
court to take a five minute break this afternoon. If so, this would be the time.

THE CORONER: Yes, I think that's probably a sensible idea. So just a very quick break, members of the jury, if that would be useful to you. You're welcome to leave your papers if you would like, thank you.

(3.05 pm)

(A short break)

(3.11 pm)

THE CORONER: Yes, thank you. Could we ask the jury to come back in, please? The next witness is ...?


THE CORONER: Yes, thank you. Are you in court? Yes, would you like to come forward.

(In the presence of the Jury)

JASON BAKER (sworn)

THE CORONER: Thank you. Do sit down. Do help yourself to a glass of water if you would like.

A. Thank you.

THE CORONER: Please could you speak close to the microphone and keep your voice up so we can hear you.

A. Yeah, will do.

THE CORONER: Thank you very much. Mr Atkins, who's standing, is going to ask questions on my behalf initially and then there will be some questions from
MR ATKINS: Can you please tell the court your full name.
A. Jason Baker.
Q. Mr Baker, I'm going to be asking you some questions about your knowledge of Lakanal House and your involvement in fighting the fire there on 3 July 2009. Can I start by asking you how long you've worked as a firefighter?
A. I've worked for 20 years.
Q. How long have you been with the London Fire Brigade?
A. 20 years.
Q. I take it from your uniform that you still work for the London Fire Brigade?
A. Yes, I do.
Q. Is it right that at the time of the fire you were a firefighter?
A. I was.
Q. Mr Baker, unless I say otherwise, my questions today will be about how things were done before or on the day of the fire, rather than how things have been done since.
A. Okay.
Q. Is it right that you were stationed at Lambeth?
A. I was.

Q. Had you ever been to Lakanal House before the day of the fire?

A. No.

Q. In that case, as we go through your evidence from time to time, I may ask you about features of the building and knowledge that you gained about the layout of Lakanal House on the day of the fire.

A. Okay.

Q. Is it right that at the time you received the call to go to Lakanal House, in fact you and your crew were headed to the Old Kent Road fire station as cover?

A. Yes, we were.

Q. I think the time of the call out that you received was 16.38, and that you responded to that and began the trip to Lakanal House at 16.42?

A. Yes.

Q. Is it right that you were on the Lambeth pump with the call sign H222?

A. I was.

Q. In fact were you driving it?

A. I was, yeah.

Q. Could you tell us, please, who else was on the pump with you?

A. Crew manager Pendleton in charge and Firefighter Keefe
Q. Is it right that your crew reported in attendance at Lakanal at 16.50?
A. Yes.

Q. To begin with, what I'd like to do, please, is to ask you about the various tasks that you and your colleagues undertook before the time that you entered the building.

Once you arrived at Lakanal, is it right that your crew manager, Mr Pendleton, went to the command unit in order to sign in and receive instructions?
A. Yes, he did.

Q. And that you put your fire equipment on?
A. Yes.

Q. And you and your colleagues went to a grassed area at the end of Fontenelle House?
A. That's correct.

Q. So that would be on the west side of Lakanal? I'll show you a map to remind you of the layout. Do you see where the white arrow is in the middle?
A. Yeah.

Q. That building is Lakanal, and then there's a grassed area to the west of it and Fontenelle is this L shaped building here.
A. That's correct, yeah.

Q. So is it right that you were waiting on this grassed area?
area on the west side of Lakanal?
A. Yes, yeah.
Q. Can you remember what you could see in terms of fire and smoke on the building at that point?
A. As we parked the fire engine and I got off, I could see a gap in Fontenelle House, and I could see Lakanal House and I could see that several floors were alight.
Q. Were you able to see which floors in particular were alight?
A. No, no, just -- I could just see several flats on fire.
Q. On different levels?
A. Yes.
Q. I think the first thing that your crew did was to use some cutting equipment to cut a hole in a fence in order to make a pathway for crews to access the building?
A. Yes, we did.
Q. Is it also right that at one point you were asked to go and collect some equipment, some high rise equipment, and take it towards the building?
A. Yes.
Q. Are you able to help us with how long it was between doing those two things?
A. I would say we were standing on the grassed area probably five to ten minutes before we cut the hole in the railings, and then it's probably another ten minutes
Q. Once you had collected the high rise equipment, were you then given any instructions at that point?
A. No.
Q. Did you make a decision yourselves about what you would do next?
A. We did, yeah.
Q. What did you and the rest of your crew decide to do at that point?
A. We decided to make our way round to the opposite side of Lakanal House, to the entry control point.
Q. The entry control point at this stage being on the ground floor?
A. Yes, it was, yeah.
Q. Outside the building?
A. Yes.
Q. On the east side of the building?
A. Yes.
Q. Did you find, at that point, that there was an aerial ladder platform and that there was a car in the way of where it needed to go?
A. There was, yes.
Q. Were you involved in sorting that problem out?
A. We was asked by a senior officer to help move the car out of the way to enable the aerial platform to get into
the space behind Lakanal House.

Q. I've just put a photograph on the screen there of a silver car on its side. Does that help you to remember: is that the car which you and your crew moved out of the way?

A. Yes, it is.

Q. How did you do that?

A. We tried to bounce the car out -- onto the kerb, but we didn't succeed in doing that, so we turned it onto its side and span it round, as you can see from the picture.

Q. Once you had completed that job, did you then go back to the entry control point?

A. We hadn't actually gone to the entry control point at that point anyway. We was intercepted on the way to there, to move the car, and then yes, we made our way to the entry control point after this.

Q. If you hadn't yet been to the entry control point, would those who were running the bridgehead have been aware that you and your crew were available to be deployed if that was necessary?

A. Not to my knowledge. We had put on our breathing apparatus equipment and then cut the hole in the railings, moved the vehicle, got the high rise gear and then made our way round. So not to my knowledge, no.

Q. What is the usual system, then? Does somebody from the
crew have to find either the incident commander or a command unit to report that you are in attendance, or would that be passed from brigade control, or how would it work?

A. The crew manager would report to the command unit to let them know that we were in attendance, hand in the roll board, and then he would get instructions and then pass those instructions on to the crew.

Q. So far as you were aware, had your crew manager been to the command unit to hand in the roll board?

A. Yes, he had.

Q. To your knowledge, had he been given instructions about going to entry control or not?

A. Not to my knowledge.

Q. Do you recall receiving then a request from entry control asking for crews?

A. No.

Q. Mr Baker, you made a statement on 27 July, so a little over three weeks after the day of the fire in 2009. Could I ask you, please, to be shown a copy of that. It's at page 353. I've just put it on the screen, but Mr Clark will hand you a paper copy in a second.

(Handed)

Could I ask you first of all whether you think the recollection of events at the time you made that
statement, about three weeks after the fire, is clearer than it is today?

A. Yes.

Q. Could I ask you then to turn, please, to page 355, so the third page of your statement. In the third paragraph down, you said that:

"Entry control asked for three new crews after we had stood there a couple of minutes. We were then told to go over to Watch Manager Payton who was stood close to us. He asked for crews who would go to the 5th, 7th and 9th floors of Lakanal House. We volunteered to go on the 9th floor and we were then given a briefing to go to the 9th floor to search and rescue and, following that, to continue firefighting."

A. Yes.

Q. Is that your recollection of events?

A. It is, yeah.

Q. So there was a request for a number of BA crews and your crew was one of the crews that volunteered for that task?

A. Yes. We was actually stood at entry control at that point and was asked by an officer to -- to go to entry control.

Q. If we can just follow it through on the same page to the next paragraph:
"We got rigged (which means we put our masks on) and we started our breathing apparatus equipment up."

So at the time you started up, were you outside the building?

A. Yes, we was, yeah.

Q. I'd like to show you a document, please, which you may not have seen before. It's at page 1033 of the advocates' bundles. I've just put it on the screen for you. Have you seen this document before?

A. No.

Q. Or a similar document?

A. Similar.

Q. If I just explain to you what this is. On the breathing apparatus equipment, you have the bodyguard system, as you know, with the distress signal unit, and that system records certain information, including, for example, the time at which the wearer started to breathe in through the equipment and the time when they finished, and after an incident that information can be downloaded onto a computer and put into a spreadsheet like this one. Can I ask you, first of all, to look over to the right-hand side. Do you see a column headed "wearer name"?

A. Yes.

Q. And we can see the names of all of your crew there.
Mr Pendleton on the top line, your name about halfway down, and Mr Keefe and Mr England towards the bottom of the page.

A. Yes.

Q. And we can see in the far left hand column the word "Lambeth". That's where you were based?

A. Yes.

Q. If we could just look, please, at your line, half way up the page. If you follow that line across to the left, to the column headed "from", that's the time at which you started to breathe through the breathing apparatus.

A. Yes.

Q. We can see that the time was at about 17.26, and at that stage you would have been outside the building on your way into the building?

A. Yes.

Q. When you went up to the 9th floor, did you walk up the stairs?

A. We did.

Q. Could you please describe to us the conditions in the stairwell. Was there a lot of smoke?

A. Not to begin with. The lower floors were relatively clear, but obviously the higher up we went the thicker the smoke became, from the 5th floor upwards.
Q. Did you encounter other people on the stairs as you were going up?
A. Not at that time.

Q. Again, if we could please just look back at page 355 of your statement. You mention that:
   "Whilst we were walking up, there were other fire crews and members of the public coming down the stairs."
   Can you remember whether that's right?
A. Obviously my memory then was obviously better than it is now of the incident, so yes, I would say that is correct.

Q. When you reached the 9th floor, did you leave the stairwell and go into the lobby?
A. We did.

Q. Could you tell us what the conditions in the lobby were like?
A. In the lobby, as far as I can remember, the smoke was quite thick at the time.

Q. I think it's right that as you come out of the lobby, there are two doors that go into corridors at each end of the building?
A. Yes.

Q. Were you able to gain access to both sides?
A. We were.

Q. Did you have any difficulty with the doors that go from
the lobby into the corridor?
A. No.

Q. Can you remember which corridor you went into first?
A. We initially walked to the right hand corridor and, I don't know why, but we then turned left and searched the left hand corridor first.

Q. Did you find in that corridor that any of the flats were on fire?
A. No.

Q. Did you go into any of the flats on that corridor?
A. No, we didn't. We banged on doors, kicked on doors, and shouted, "Fire Brigade", got no answer, so presumed there was nobody in those -- in those flats.

Q. Did you know when you went into the building that crews had previously carried out searches on the 9th floor?
A. No, did not know.

Q. When you came to the second corridor, then, did you find that one of the flats in that corridor was alight?
A. Yes, it was.

Q. Which flat was that?
A. I believe it was the first flat on the left-hand side, a bedroom.

Q. Did you do the same thing? Did you go down the length of the corridor, knocking on the doors to see if there was anybody there?
A. Yes, myself and my crew did.

Q. Was there any answer?

A. No.

Q. Did you attempt to fight the fire in the flat on the 9th floor?

A. After we'd searched the flats and banged on all the doors, we went back and fought the fire in the -- in that first flat, yes.

Q. So far as you were concerned, were you able to put the fire out?

A. As best we could, yeah.

Q. Did you then encounter another crew who were coming down from a floor above you?

A. We returned back to the stairwell because we'd carried out our specific task on that floor that we'd been told to by entry control and we was met by a crew coming down from the 11th floor.

Q. Did they have anyone with them?

A. They did. They had -- I think they had a female and a child, or I think two children.

Q. Can you remember how old the children were? Did you see?

A. No, the smoke was quite bad at the time. I couldn't really make out. I was talking to the -- I think he was the crew manager in charge of the crew at that time, so
I didn't actually look at any members of the public.

Q. Are you able to describe them at all?
A. No.

Q. If we just look back to your statement, please, very quickly, towards the top of page 356. It's the third paragraph down. You say that:

"This other crew had between them a woman and two children."

And you thought that they were black people. Is that right? Do you remember that?
A. Yeah, yeah, as far as memory serves, I would say so, yes.

Q. Can you remember whether there was also a man with them, another member of the same family?
A. I can't remember, no.

Q. You told us that one of the crew you encountered was a crew manager. Did you recognise him? Did you know who he was?
A. I didn't, no.

Q. How were you able to tell that he was a crew manager?
A. Well, as far as I can remember, he had rank markings on his helmet.

Q. Was there any conversation with this other crew?
A. Yes. He informed me they had come down from the 11th floor and there were people trapped on the 11th floor.
and to get up there as soon as we could.

Q. Did he mention a particular flat number?
A. Flat number 81.

Q. Can you remember whether he said to you, on the one hand, that there were people in flat 81 and that flat is on the 11th floor, or did he say they had come from the 11th floor?
A. As far as I remember, he said they came from the 11th floor and that was where flat 81 was.

Q. Did he ask you and your colleagues to do anything?
A. He basically asked us to go upstairs or get up there as quick as we could.

Q. At that point, before taking any other action, were you able to relay that information back down to the bridgehead?
A. I had the radio on my breathing apparatus. I did relay the information through that we was proceeding -- Lambeth pump's crew were proceeding to the 11th floor, but there was so much radio traffic that I don't -- didn't get an answer back.

Q. Does that mean that you're not able to say whether or not your message was received?
A. Yes, basically, as far as I knew I relayed the message but I didn't hear an answer back. But there was a lot of radio traffic going on.
Q. Did you then go up to the 11th floor?
A. We did.

Q. When you left the stairwell on the 11th floor and went into the lobby, were you able to see into the corridors?
A. As we came out of the lobby we turned immediately right and was met basically with the whole corridor alight.

Q. Was that the corridor at the north end of the building, so on the same side as the flat where you had been fighting the fire?
A. Yes.

Q. Could you please give us an impression of how much of the corridor was burning, so far as you can see?
A. Because we'd gone up there without any firefighting equipment -- there was no hose up there -- we literally had a few seconds to look. It looked like the entire corridor was on fire.

Q. Had you left your hose on the 9th floor?
A. Yes.

Q. Did you attempt to fight the fire?
A. We went back down to the 9th floor, and each of us stood on the landing and we passed the charged hose -- which means the hose was full of water -- up to the 11th floor and attempted to fight the fire, yes.

Q. Was that effective? Were you able to move down the corridor?
A. It was effective, and as soon as we attempted to move down the corridor, the fire basically went over the top of our heads and back down behind us again, so we had to keep moving back.

Q. It may be obvious, but why did the fact that the fire was going over your head and behind you mean that you had to move back down towards the central staircase?

A. Because obviously we have to put out everything behind us. We don't want to walk into -- or be coming down into a corridor that's alight with flames behind us as well. That's our means of escape, so we have to keep that protected.

Q. If we just look, please, at the bottom of page 356 in your statement. There's a part where you describe the fire and you say in the last sentence on that page: "The fire was extremely fierce and intense because it was in an enclosed area."

Then over the page you say: "The fire was so fierce we couldn't get far into the corridor. Everything was really burnt and I couldn't make anything out."

Is that how it was?

A. That's correct, yeah.

Q. Then in the next paragraph you say: "The fire kept beating us back. We were not there
for long when our warning whistle went off on our
breathing apparatus."

A. That's right.

Q. That's the warning that you're running low on air and
that means it's time to withdraw?
A. That's right.

Q. In fact, I think, looking two lines further down, you
stayed beyond the point when your whistle had sounded?
A. Yes, we did, yeah.

Q. In principle, ought you to withdraw when the whistle
sounds?
A. Yeah, we should -- we should actually do that, yes, but
because we thought there was casualties up there, we
thought we had enough -- maybe a little bit more time up
there to try and get them out.

Q. At the time when you had to leave, did you hand on to
another crew?
A. Yes, there was an EDBA crew. As I turned, they was
directly behind us and we handed over the hose to them.

Q. I think they had with them some of the London Ambulance
Service's HART team?
A. They did, yeah, two -- two of them.

Q. You told us that you thought that there might be
casualties on that corridor. Were you aware at that
time that it might have been possible to reach those
flats on the 11th floor from the balconies on the 12th floor?

A. Not at that time, no.

Q. Once you withdrew from the 11th floor, I take it you made your way down to ground level?

A. We did.

Q. Back to the entry control point?

A. Yes.

Q. Was there some sort of debrief with the officers there?

A. Yes, that's standard procedure. You debrief at the entry control point to let them know exactly what you've done and where you've been. Yes, there was a debrief.

Q. If we just go back to the table we were looking at earlier, please. You remember we were looking at the "from" time, which was 17.26, the time that you started up your equipment, and we can see in the next column over, "to", the time that you stopped breathing air through the equipment, 17.45.

A. Yes.

Q. Did you shut your equipment down when you reached the entry control point outside the building?

A. If I remember rightly, yes, I did, yes.

Q. Can you recall what information you passed on as part of the debrief?

A. That we had carried out, as detailed, the search and
rescue on the 9th floor and to extinguish any fire, and then to say that we made our way to the 11th floor, taking the hose with us, and attempted to fight the fire on the 11th floor.

Q. When you passed on the information that you had fought a fire on the 11th floor, was it your impression that the officers you were speaking to already knew that there was a fire on the 11th floor, or was that new information for them?

A. I -- I don't know.

Q. Are you able to remember who it was you were speaking to at the entry control point?

A. I believe it was Watch Manager Payton.

Q. After you came out of the building, I believe that you saw that two paramedics came out some time after you and that they had brought with them some small children?

A. Yes.

Q. And you helped them by holding up a tarpaulin to give them some privacy, some space to work?

A. Yes.

Q. After that, you remained at Lakanal House in case you were needed for any other work but eventually you heard that only fresh and extended duration breathing apparatus crews were going to be used?

A. That's correct.
Q. And so in the event there was no need for you to go back into the building; is that right?
A. That's right, yeah.

Q. We appreciate that you only went into the building once and that you were told to go to particular floors, but could I ask: did you ever build up in your own mind a sense of where different flats were in the building? If I just show you a diagram to explain what I mean. If you stand outside the building looking at the west side, you have a view similar to that one, so you can count, of course, what floor you're on but you don't know which flat is which, looking at the side of the building, whereas in this diagram the flat numbers have been superimposed onto the top.
A. Yes.

Q. In your time on the day of the fire, did you build up that sort of image of where different flats were?
A. No, no.

Q. Mr Baker, my final question is: what single thing do you think would have helped you most, on the day of the fire, to carry out your duties?
A. Because obviously that's not our ground, so we wouldn't actually visit a block like that, but plans of the layout that we could have looked at before we actually went into the building that wouldn't have been available
to us personally but maybe could have been at entry
control at some point for us to look at before we went
into the building.

Q. Mr Baker, thank you very much. Those are all the
questions that I have, but there may be questions from
others.

THE CORONER: Thank you. Mr Hendy.

Questions by MR HENDY

MR HENDY: Mr Baker, my name's Hendy. I represent some of
the bereaved families. Just a couple of questions,
please.

A. Yeah.

Q. First of all, when you got there -- I wonder if we could
just put up your witness statement, page 353. At that
point of the page there you say:

"We arrived on the scene at 16.50 and I could see
through a gap that Lakanal House was on fire. After we
parked the engine, Crew Manager Pendleton went to the
command unit which was parked in Havil Street on the
opposite side of the road. Myself, Mark and Sean
remained with the engine."

You began to put your fire equipment on:

"Crew Manager Pendleton then ..."

And we go over the page, 354:

"... came back and said we had to make our way to
a grassed area at the end of Fontenelle House
overlooking the front of Lakanal House."

Then you say:

"We made our way to the grassed area, which was
fenced off by using Dalwood Street."

Then a senior officer asked you to cut a pathway,
and you then cut a hole in the fence to get there. Then
you went back to standing on the grassed area, and in
the third paragraph, you say, taking it from the second
line:

"We were stood there with a crew from Southwark.
There were also two or three senior officers stood there
but I couldn't tell you who they were. We were stood
there watching the fire develop for approximately five
or ten minutes. There were members of the public
standing outside the cordon. They were shouting words
to the effect of: 'What are you doing standing there?
Why don't you help these people?'
Which was no doubt rather distressing for you and
your colleagues?
A. Yes, it was, yeah.
Q. Because you were absolutely prepared to do everything
you could. You were simply awaiting orders according to
the instructions to stand in that particular place?
A. Yes, we were.
Q. You say then:

"We were waiting there for about ten minutes and we were told to get some high rise gear."

Then you got that gear, and then, at the bottom of the page, you say:

"As we seemed to be standing around, we decided on our own initiative to make our way round to the back of Lakanal House."

Does it follow from that that your impression was that the command unit had really told you to go and wait in the wrong place, or if it was the right place, that the orders had been superseded in some way without telling your team?

A. It seemed to be strange that we'd been asked to go and stand at that point. We was rigged in breathing apparatus at the time and we couldn't understand why we was being told to wait there rather than round at the entry control point, which is on the other side of the building.

Q. Because really, apart from cutting a hole in the fence and getting your gear together, you'd wasted the best part of half an hour?

A. Yes, we did.

Q. Anyway, on your own initiative, your crew went round to the east side of Lakanal House and there you found entry
control and entry control -- and I'm looking at
page 355, the third paragraph down:

"... asked for three new crews after we'd stood
there for a couple of minutes. We were then told to go
over to Watch Manager Payton, who was stood close to us.
He asked for crews who would go to the 5th, 7th and 9th
floors."

And you volunteered to go to the 9th floor. You
were then given a briefing to go to the 9th floor to
search and rescue and, following that, to continue
fighting. Was it Watch Manager Payton that gave you
that briefing?

A. Yes, it was.

Q. Mr Atkins asked you whether you knew that a crew had
searched the 9th floor earlier, and you said you didn't
know that. I just wanted to examine this a little bit
further. You switched on your BA kit at 17.26. In
fact, that was about half an hour before
Crew Manager Clarke and Bennett had searched the 9th
floor, but when Mr Payton briefed you to search on the
9th floor, did he indicate that there was some special
reason why the 9th floor in particular should be
searched?

A. No, not that I remember. It was -- it was just
volunteers to go to the 5th, 7th and 9th floor, no, just
Q. There was nothing in what he'd said to indicate that it had already been searched but he was troubled that it hadn't been searched properly or there may have been people that had gone there in the meantime, or something of that kind?

A. I don't remember. No, didn't seem to be.

Q. Crew Manager Clarke told the jury some days ago now that after he had searched the 9th floor with Firefighter Bennett, they came out and he updated Chris Payton at the bridgehead before returning to the grass at the front, but there was nothing in your discussion with Mr Payton that made you think that the 9th floor had been searched half an hour earlier?

A. No.

Q. Thank you very much.

Questions by MR DOWDEN

MR DOWDEN: Yes, good afternoon. My name's Dowden. I ask questions on behalf of Mr Francisquini. I want to deal just with the part of your evidence where you say that you met a crew manager as you were going up the stairs, and just ask you to go back to what you recall he said during that conversation. I just want to explore how sure you are that he said he'd come from the 11th floor.

A. Well, he did say the 11th floor, and obviously we was on
the 9th, he'd come down. We'd seen him actually walk --
physically walk down the stairs, so there was no reason
to presume that he hadn't come from the 11th floor.
Q. Or that he had descended from a higher floor?
A. A higher floor. And because we knew by then the layout
of the building, the alternate floors from the
staircase, we knew the 10th floor would be -- basically
had the fire exit door on there which we couldn't get
into, and so the next floor would be the 11th.
Q. Okay, and how long did it take you to get from the 9th
floor to the 11th floor?
A. It was a matter of seconds. We ran up the stairs.
Q. Given what you had been told by that crew manager coming
out with members of the public from the 11th floor --
the scenario you were met with when you got to the 11th
floor was a corridor that was fully on fire, a well
established fire; would that be correct?
A. That's correct, yes.
Q. And given that, and given the short period of time
between you meeting that crew manager on the stairs, did
you radio and ask for clarification as to where he'd
come from and how they'd got access to the flats on that
floor?
A. No, we didn't. The only thing I radioed through was to
say that Hotel 222 Lambeth's BA crew was proceeding to
the 11th floor to search for casualties.

Q. Thank you.

THE CORONER: Ms Al Tai.

Questions by MS AL TAI

MS AL TAI: Good afternoon, Mr Baker.

A. Afternoon.

Q. I act on behalf of one of the bereaved. When you were proceeding up to the 11th floor, you were informed that there were individuals in flat 81. Were you informed that there were any other flats that required assistance?

A. No, the only flat that -- that was mentioned was flat 81.

Q. Thank you.

THE CORONER: Thank you.

MR COMPTON: No questions, thank you.

THE CORONER: Mr Walsh?

MR WALSH: No thank you, madam.

THE CORONER: Thank you very much. Members of the jury?

Questions by the Jury

THE FOREMAN OF THE JURY: Thank you, madam coroner, we have two.

I was just wondering: you've mentioned that you radioed down to your colleagues that you'd moved to the 11th floor. We've heard that you were able to get that
message through but you weren't able to get confirmation that it had gone through. I was just wondering: was that using your personal radio or your comms?

A. It was using -- it was using -- I had the comms on that day.

THE FOREMAN OF THE JURY: Thank you. Our second question -- I just need to confer with my fellow juror. I think this may have been answered. (Pause) Okay, about the task on the 9th floor, were you asked to look into a particular flat on the 9th floor, not the 11th?

A. No, we wasn't asked to go to a particular flat, just to search on the 9th floor in general and just to continue firefighting.

THE FOREMAN OF THE JURY: Okay. Thank you very much.

THE CORONER: Thank you very much.

Mr Baker -- I'm so sorry.

Further questions by MR ATKINS

MR ATKINS: Forgive me. Mr Hendy asked me quickly to deal with one point and I'll do so.

Mr Baker, is it right that on the day of the fire you stayed until quite late in the day, that you were there until perhaps 8 or 9 in the evening and then you were relieved and you went back to the station?

A. Yes.

Q. Is it right that you then attended Lakanal again the
following day?

A. I did.

Q. And that as part of your duties that day you assisted by carrying out of the building some of the casualties who were still inside?

A. I did.

Q. And that you were involved and you helped in carrying out the bodies of Helen Udoaka and also Catherine Hickman?

A. Yes.

Q. And lastly Thais Francisquini?

A. Yes.

Q. Thank you.

THE CORONER: Thank you. Mr Baker, thank you very much for coming and thank you very much for the help that you've given to us. Thank you.

A. Thank you.

THE CORONER: You're free to go.

(The witness withdrew)

THE CORONER: Yes, I think it's probably a little bit late to be starting Mr Niblett, so shall we finish now and then continue at 10 o'clock tomorrow morning? Thank you very much.

Members of the jury, we'll continue at 10 o'clock tomorrow morning, please, and please don't forget the
warnings I have given you not to discuss the matter with
anybody at all and not to carry out any research. Thank
you very much.

(In the absence of the Jury)

MR ATKINS: Madam, in terms of the timetable tomorrow, the
proposal is to call Crew Manager Niblett, Crew Manager
Rose, PC Cox, Firefighter Hull, to read Firefighter
Stevens, then to call Firefighter Thorpe.

THE CORONER: Right, thank you very much. So far as the
other advocates other than Mr Atkins are concerned, does
that sound manageable? I'm just getting a feel for how
long we need with a number of witnesses. Does anyone
perceive there to be any difficulty in getting through
those witnesses and statements tomorrow? Good.

Yes, Mr Compton?

MR COMPTON: I just wondered if Mr Atkins could repeat the
list, actually. I'm sorry to do that.

MR ATKINS: I'm sorry, I did it rather quickly. Crew
Manager Niblett, Crew Manager Rose, PC Richard Cox,
Firefighter Hull and then the proposal is to read
Firefighter Stevens and then to call Firefighter Thorpe.

THE CORONER: Thank you very much. Good, thank you. Yes.

MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: I can indicate my proposal in respect of
the backlog of witnesses. These are all the witnesses
who, at some point or another, were listed to have given
oral evidence by now. I've sent this by email as well, so people don't need to take a note, but this is the situation: there are nine such witnesses at the moment and I'm going to propose that the following six be read, and they are Morgan, Tungatt, Hyllam, Douglas, Simon Chapman and Geddes, and that leaves three others in respect of whom I don't yet have a firm proposal. They are Trevor Chapman, Shamoli Shamme and Towler.

THE CORONER: Towler?

MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Simon Towler.

THE CORONER: All right. Thank you very much. So if everybody could give some thought to that overnight, that would be very helpful. Thank you. Anything else?

Good. Thank you all very much.

(3.56 pm)

(The Court adjourned until 10 o'clock the following day)
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NB: page 14 line 12 "information considered for a very significant"…

The transcribers have listed to the tape and their transcription is a verbatim recording of what the speaker said.