

1 Tuesday, 22 January 2013

2 (10.00 am)

3 Housekeeping

4 THE CORONER: Are there any matters to raise before we ask
5 the jury to come in?

6 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: I don't think so, madam. I think it may
7 be better to have any discussion about the answers to
8 the jury questions at the end of the day and start with
9 witnesses now.

10 THE CORONER: All right. In that case, could we ask the
11 jury to come in?

12 MR EDWARDS: Madam, one matter. Mr Hendy is here -- I'm not
13 sure where he is, but I raise this on his behalf.

14 A large number of photographs and video exhibits were
15 disclosed last night. Mr Hendy and I have not had the
16 opportunity, purely as a practical point, to go through
17 those now. It may be that there is material on those
18 CDs which is highly relevant to the firefighters who are
19 about to give evidence. We simply don't know yet.

20 I can't say any more than that now. It's simply to flag
21 up that this may be a potential issue.

22 THE CORONER: What are you asking me to do?

23 MR EDWARDS: Madam, I'm simply pointing it out at this
24 juncture to say it's something that we may need to raise
25 later. It may be firefighters need to be recalled to

1 specifically answer comments on photographs that we
2 simply have not yet looked at.

3 THE CORONER: All right. Does anybody want to raise
4 anything else on that? Well, I note your position,
5 thank you.

6 Yes, could we have the jury, thank you.

7 (In the presence of the Jury)

8 THE CORONER: Members of the jury, good morning.

9 Mr Maxwell-Scott, perhaps you could just outline for us
10 the evidence that we're going to deal with today.

11 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Yes. We're going to hear first from two
12 firefighters, the first two who were committed. They
13 are Charles Fournier and Lyndan Simons, and we are going
14 to hear subsequently from two residents, Louise Daisey
15 and Norman Ebiowei.

16 THE CORONER: Thank you very much. Is Mr Fournier here?
17 Could he come forward, please. Thank you.

18 CHARLES FOURNIER (sworn)

19 THE CORONER: Mr Fournier, thank you very much. Do sit
20 down. I suggest you help yourself to a glass of water.

21 A. Thank you.

22 THE CORONER: You can see that the microphone in front of
23 you is switched on. You need to be quite close to it
24 for your voice to be picked up, and we do need, please,
25 for you to speak close to the microphone. It may help

1 to achieve that if, instead of giving your answers to
2 the room, you give your answers facing across to the
3 jury.

4 A. Okay.

5 THE CORONER: All right? Thank you. Mr Maxwell-Scott, who
6 is standing, is going to ask you some questions on my
7 behalf initially and then there will be some questions
8 from others.

9 A. Okay.

10 THE CORONER: Thank you.

11 Questions from MR MAXWELL-SCOTT

12 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Can you give the court your full name,
13 please?

14 A. Charles Albert Fournier.

15 Q. I'm going to be asking you some questions this morning
16 about your knowledge of Lakanal House and about your
17 involvement in fighting the fire there on 3 July 2009.

18 A. Okay.

19 Q. Firstly, at the time of that fire, how long had you been
20 employed by the London Fire Brigade?

21 A. About 18 months to two years.

22 Q. I take it from your uniform that you still work for the
23 London Fire Brigade?

24 A. That's correct.

25 Q. Unless I indicate otherwise, my questions today will be

1 directed to how things were done on or before the date
2 of the fire.

3 A. Okay.

4 Q. At that time you were a firefighter, weren't you?

5 A. Yes, I was.

6 Q. We heard that there are a range of different reasons why
7 a firefighter might visit a building like Lakanal House.
8 We've heard about operational incidents, which might be
9 fires but might be something else like somebody being
10 stuck in a lift. We've heard about home fire safety
11 visits and we've heard about familiarisation visits,
12 sometimes called 72D visits. You're familiar with each
13 of those?

14 A. I am.

15 Q. For which of those reasons, as far as you can remember,
16 had you visited Lakanal House before the fire
17 in July 2009?

18 A. I can't recall visiting before then, no.

19 Q. When you arrived at the scene, were you given any
20 briefing about the nature of the building or the layout
21 of the building before you went into it?

22 A. I wasn't briefed on the layout of the building but
23 obviously the size of the building -- we knew it was
24 a high rise building, so we would have implemented high
25 rise straight away.

1 Q. You're just going to need to keep your voice up a bit
2 and perhaps pull the microphone a bit closer to you.

3 A. Okay. Turning up to the building, we would have known
4 it was a high rise building because of the size of the
5 building, but regarding the layout I wouldn't have known
6 about the layout of the building.

7 Q. What I'm going to do in that case is to ask you about
8 what you did on the day, and at certain points I'll ask
9 you about knowledge that you gained of the layout of the
10 building as a result of the things you did.

11 A. Okay.

12 Q. Is it right that on the day you were called out from
13 Peckham fire station and you travelled on the pump?

14 A. That's correct.

15 Q. And your colleagues travelled in convoy on the pump
16 ladder?

17 A. That's correct.

18 Q. Do you remember who was travelling on the pump with you?

19 A. There was a crew manager that was standing by from
20 Addington, which was John Dennis, Firefighter Simons and
21 Firefighter Crowley, I think, was driving. I can't
22 remember who was driving that day. I think it was
23 Firefighter Crowley.

24 Q. Mr Fournier, you made a statement on 28 July 2009.

25 A. That's correct.

1 Q. Was your memory of events better then than it is today?

2 A. Yes, it was.

3 Q. Would it help you to be able to look at that statement?

4 A. Yes, please.

5 Q. That starts on page 117 in the statements bundle.

6 (Handed) Do you recognise that as your statement?

7 A. Yes, I do.

8 Q. So in the second paragraph, it looks as if your memory

9 is correct. You were travelling with Crew Manager John

10 Dennis, who, as you say, wasn't normally based at

11 Peckham fire station. Mr Crowley was driving and Lyndan

12 Simons was with you, making up a crew of four?

13 A. That's correct.

14 Q. Your statement says that as you were driving to the call

15 you were kitting up in breathing apparatus. Do you

16 remember why that was?

17 A. Because we was called to a fire, the crew that -- rig en

18 route -- one machine sometimes rigs en route or rigs

19 when we get there, depending on the nature of the call,

20 but because it was a fire we decided that we were better

21 off putting it on then because it was only across the

22 road. It would have saved time by doing it then instead

23 of doing it when we got there.

24 Q. Then you say in your statement that you could see that

25 there was a flat on fire on the 8th floor, and that was

1 your impression?

2 A. From the outside, yes.

3 Q. From the outside. If you wait one second, I'll bring up

4 on the screen a representation of what the building

5 looks like from the west side. Help us with this: to

6 what extent would you say it's easy from a distance to

7 assess exactly what floor something is happening on?

8 A. Well, from the outside it was just a -- a rough guess

9 and counting from the ground upwards. I would have

10 counted, obviously, from the ground upwards but with

11 everything that was going on around, it was just a rough

12 guess.

13 Q. Well, it was, in fact, a pretty accurate guess, because

14 it was on the 9th floor. I'm certainly not criticising

15 you in any way; I'm just making the point with you that

16 it's not immediately easy to count off exactly the right

17 floor number when you're looking from a view like this.

18 Do you agree?

19 A. I agree.

20 Q. According to your statement, the flat above where the

21 fire was was not yet itself on fire?

22 A. Correct.

23 Q. But you could see debris falling from the flat that was

24 on fire?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. And the window of that flat was on fire?

2 A. Yes.

3 THE CORONER: Mr Maxwell-Scott, your microphone.

4 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Were you then instructed to make your way
5 up and establish a bridgehead?

6 A. That's correct.

7 Q. On what floor?

8 A. On the 7th.

9 Q. Did you do that yourself by going up in the lift or by
10 walking up the stairs?

11 A. In the fire lift.

12 Q. Do you remember who was in the lift with you?

13 A. Crew Manager Dennis and Firefighter Simons.

14 Q. If you wait one second, I'll show you a couple of images
15 of the lift area. That is a view at ground floor level
16 of the access points to the two lifts. Does that help
17 to refresh your memory?

18 A. No.

19 Q. Do you remember that one of them was in service and one
20 of them was out of service?

21 A. No.

22 Q. If you look at that photograph, do you notice a sign
23 above the two lifts?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. I'll show you a close-up of that now. Do you remember

1 seeing that sign?

2 A. No.

3 Q. Do you remember seeing other signs within the building?

4 A. No.

5 Q. So you made your way up to the 7th floor in the lift in
6 order to establish the bridgehead. Did you then begin
7 setting up the equipment to do that?

8 A. That's correct.

9 Q. According to your statement, as you were doing that,
10 a black man came up the stairs and he said he'd been on
11 the phone to his sister and that his sister and nephew
12 were on the 9th floor, and your colleagues Mr Simons and
13 Mr Dennis escorted him out of the building?

14 A. My colleagues spoke to the man and from there -- the
15 information from there -- I didn't know any information
16 from there because he was escorted out of the building.
17 He wasn't escorted out of the building; he was escorted
18 to safe air, which was lower levels that weren't
19 smoke-logged.

20 Q. Help us as best you can: did either Mr Simons or
21 Mr Dennis or both of them go down temporarily from the
22 7th floor to help him?

23 A. One of them would have. I can't remember which one
24 would have, but one of them would have.

25 Q. But that only took 30 seconds to a minute or so?

1 A. Yeah, it didn't take long at all.

2 Q. And then whoever it was came back?

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. Do you remember if someone was acting as entry control
5 officer before you were committed?

6 A. I can't recall at the time.

7 Q. Did there come a time when you and Mr Simons activated
8 your breathing apparatus sets --

9 A. That's correct.

10 Q. -- and handed your tally keys to someone?

11 A. To Crew Manager Dennis.

12 Q. At the time that you did that, what were conditions
13 like?

14 A. They started to get worse on the stairwell, from the
15 7th.

16 Q. I should have gone back. Where were you when you
17 activated the BA set?

18 A. On the 7th floor. On the bridgehead of the 7th floor.

19 Q. Do you recall whether you did that in the stairwell or
20 in a lobby area by the lifts?

21 A. It was in the stairwell.

22 Q. So you'd made your way from the lobby by the lifts into
23 the stairwell?

24 A. That's correct.

25 Q. You were saying, I think, that it was becoming smokey?

1 A. Yeah, conditions were worsening regarding the smoke.

2 Q. Let me show you a document that will help to identify
3 when you started up your BA sets. This is in the
4 advocates' bundle at page 1037. (Handed) Firstly,
5 Mr Fournier, I expect this is not a document you've seen
6 before?

7 A. No, I haven't.

8 Q. And it's not, I imagine, a format of document that
9 you're familiar with?

10 A. No, that's correct too.

11 Q. What it is is a document which summarises data
12 downloaded from the bodyguard system on the breathing
13 apparatus equipment. If you look at the very bottom
14 right of the page, do you see your name? No,
15 I apologise; a couple up --

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. -- do you see your name? And then if you look across to
18 the middle of that row there's a column headed "From".
19 The time that we should be using, as we understand it,
20 is 16.33. You were with Mr Simons, and he's also, at
21 the bottom of the page, recorded as having started up
22 his equipment at an almost identical time?

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. Does that fit with your recollection, that the two of
25 you started your sets up together and were committed

1 together?

2 A. That's correct.

3 Q. Your statement says that the two of you went up to the

4 9th floor and that you had the hose and enforcer. Just

5 help the members of the jury with what an enforcer is?

6 A. It's part of our breaking-in equipment. Do you need any

7 more detail than that?

8 THE CORONER: I think that's probably sufficient.

9 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Probably sufficient. You went up to the

10 9th floor and opened a security door. Let me show you

11 a photograph to see if that assists. That's a door from

12 the lobby area by the lifts onto a corridor. Is that

13 the door you're referring to when you say you opened the

14 security doors?

15 A. That's correct.

16 Q. You did that by using a drop key?

17 A. That's correct.

18 Q. Is it right that you were at the front of the hose and

19 Mr Simons was backing you up?

20 A. That's correct.

21 Q. You went through onto the corridor and asked for the

22 water to be turned on?

23 A. That's correct.

24 Q. How would you ask for that?

25 A. You would explain what delivery you wanted to have on,

1 at what pressure.

2 Q. Do you do that over a radio?

3 A. We would -- we would have done that over the radio but
4 to Crew Manager Dennis, who would have opened the
5 bridgehead, because the dry riser would have already
6 been charged by the pump operator downstairs.

7 Q. Mr Dennis would have remained at the bridgehead on the
8 7th floor?

9 A. That's correct.

10 Q. Your statement says:

11 "We carried out entry procedure clearing air."
12 Can you just explain to the jury what that means?

13 A. That would have been opening a door safely with -- well,
14 Lyndan would have opened the door with me on the front
15 of the hose, basically, so we could make entry into the
16 corridor safely by cooling the fire gases to make our
17 way into the hallway -- corridor.

18 Q. The statement refers to the fact that the hose was stuck
19 and you had to go back to the starting point, turn the
20 water off and release the hose?

21 A. That's correct.

22 Q. Was that a major problem or a minor problem?

23 A. A minor problem. It took a matter of seconds to turn it
24 off at the bridgehead, release the water from the hose,
25 remove the hose and then ask for it to be charged again.

1 Q. Then you went back into the corridor, carried out the
2 entry procedure again --

3 A. Correct.

4 Q. -- and made your way to the first flat on the left,
5 which was a flat where the fire was?

6 A. That's correct.

7 Q. At that time, were you then joined by another crew in
8 breathing apparatus?

9 A. We were then backed up by a pair from Old Kent Road --
10 a crew from Old Kent Road, sorry.

11 Q. Did you know them?

12 A. I didn't know who it was personally. We all look the
13 same, basically, in fire gear, coming up behind us. It
14 could have been anyone from Old Kent Road.

15 Q. Did you find out later they were from the Old Kent Road?

16 A. Yeah. Not during the time, no.

17 Q. You were at the front. If you tell the jury as best you
18 remember what you then did, as you were ready to enter
19 the flat.

20 A. As we was ready to enter the flat, we could see the fire
21 was at that door and was about to put the door in, and
22 the door fell in. We had the enforcer with us. We was
23 about to use the enforcer to put the door in.
24 Literally, the door fell in. We only had to touch it
25 and it had fallen in. So then we made entry into the

1 flat that way.

2 Q. What was the scene that you found in front of you when
3 you went in?

4 A. There was a fire in the room and behind the door in
5 front of us. We just took it as a bedroom. Obviously
6 when we looked to the left, we could see daylight. We
7 could a see right up through the building, which we
8 gathered was the window which was alight when we turned
9 up.

10 Q. You could see out?

11 A. I could see daylight, yeah. There was just a hole, like
12 a hole in the building. If we would have walked off of
13 it we would have fell out of the building.

14 Q. And there was a fire between you and that daylight; is
15 that right?

16 A. That's correct, there was.

17 Q. How severe was that fire?

18 A. Well, there was no identifiable furniture in the room
19 apart from the frame of a -- it looked like a bunk bed,
20 but everything else looked like it had just been burnt
21 away.

22 Q. What did you do to try and put it out?

23 A. We extinguished the fire obviously with the hose and
24 water, and then we tried to extinguish the fire on
25 the -- above us, but the stairwell had been compromised.

1 We trod on the first step and it gave way, so it was
2 obviously not safe for us to make our way up the stairs
3 that way.

4 Q. How soon after being in the flat did you realise it was
5 on two floors?

6 A. As soon as we saw the stairs.

7 Q. Do I understand from your evidence that you got one step
8 up and then realised it wasn't safe to proceed?

9 A. Yeah, the stair -- the bottom step gave way, which just
10 showed us that the stairs had been compromised and it
11 was burning away.

12 Q. Was there fire on the upper floor, as far as you could
13 tell?

14 A. Yeah, there was.

15 Q. Were you able to take any steps to try and extinguish
16 that fire?

17 A. Not on the -- not on the stairs that were in the flat,
18 no.

19 Q. I'm assuming from what you've said, and the fact that
20 you were only able to get one step upstairs, that you
21 were not able to build up any picture of what lay on the
22 upper floor?

23 A. That's correct.

24 Q. Did there then come a time when you checked your air
25 supply and you saw that you were low on air?

1 A. My colleague checked his air supply and said he was low
2 on air and that we needed to turn round and make our way
3 out.

4 Q. So what did you do next?

5 A. We handed over to Old Kent Road, who -- I think by that
6 time had we'd requested a three-piece extension, which
7 is three pieces of ladder, so we could make our way to
8 the top -- the top floor, for Old Kent Road to then
9 extinguish the top floor of the flat.

10 Q. So that means that the fire crews can rely on a safe
11 ladder that they've brought with them, rather than the
12 stairs which appeared to be unsafe?

13 A. That's correct.

14 Q. Did you see the ladder arrive?

15 A. No.

16 Q. Did you hear it was coming?

17 A. It had been -- it had been sent over the radio. It had
18 been requested to be brought up.

19 Q. At the time that you left that flat, which we know to be
20 flat 65, did you hand over to two firefighters or four
21 firefighters?

22 A. My colleague handed over what had happened, what needed
23 to be done as we was leaving. Obviously we'd come out
24 and passed the crew that was assisting us coming up, and
25 he'd passed over the information to them, and then we

1 left the building, we left the corridor.

2 Q. I may not have been quite as clear as I should have
3 been. You've described that there was another crew of
4 two there from the Old Kent Road?

5 A. Yeah.

6 Q. Did you see any other firefighters in breathing
7 apparatus before you got down to the bridgehead?

8 A. No.

9 Q. So when you left, there was that two person crew from
10 the Old Kent Road fighting the fire?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. I'll just show you a document that we looked at early
13 earlier which will give you an indication of the time
14 when you stopped relying on the breathing apparatus.
15 You'll remember where your name was on the document, and
16 if we look across, this suggests that you stopped using
17 it at 16.38. In other words, you were using the
18 breathing apparatus for just under 15 minutes. Does
19 that sound about right?

20 A. Sounds correct.

21 Q. Could you just tell the members of the jury what it is
22 that you physically do to stop using the breathing
23 apparatus?

24 A. You mean closing down the set?

25 Q. Close down the set. By pressing something?

1 A. You press your first breath lever on your mask, take
2 the -- well, take -- press your first breath lever on
3 your mask and then take the mask off.

4 Q. Do you remember where you were when you did that?

5 A. I was outside the front of -- was it the west side of
6 the building? Where I could see the window at the
7 beginning, on the grassy area outside the front, after
8 I'd got my tally back from the entry control point.

9 Q. So is it your recollection that you continued to wear
10 the breathing apparatus until you got to the ground
11 floor, out of the building?

12 A. That's correct.

13 Q. Just looking at your statement, on page 118 near the
14 lower of the two hole punches, it says:

15 "We debriefed on the entry control officer but I do
16 not know who we spoke to."

17 A. Do you want me to explain what I mean by "debrief"?

18 Q. Yes.

19 A. It was basically what -- what we'd done, what we'd seen
20 and what we'd done. We'd handed that over and then
21 explained to them that Old Kent Road were there. They
22 already knew that Old Kent Road were there because they
23 had their tallies in the entry control board. It was
24 basically what we'd done and what we'd seen.

25 Q. The debrief, is that at the bridgehead?

1 A. I can't recall where it was. I can't even remember who
2 I spoke to at the time.

3 Q. Would it have been someone you recognised?

4 A. It would have been someone I recognised, yeah, but after
5 being under air and working quite hard, it was a bit
6 disorientating anyway.

7 Q. If the entry control officer was at the 7th floor, would
8 you have been able to take your mask off and say a few
9 words to him and then put it back on and walk down to
10 the ground floor?

11 A. I wouldn't have done that, no.

12 Q. Just explain why you wouldn't have done that?

13 A. Because if -- if it would have been smokey and
14 I hadn't -- the entry control point hadn't given my
15 tally back at that time, I wouldn't have taken my mask
16 off.

17 Q. Would you have been able to communicate with him and
18 debrief with the mask on?

19 A. Yeah, he could have heard me speaking to him, yeah.

20 Q. So your best memory is that you debriefed an entry
21 control officer, wherever that happened, and then walked
22 down the central staircase with your mask and breathing
23 apparatus on?

24 A. That's correct.

25 Q. And you switched it off when you got outside the

1 building?

2 A. That's correct.

3 Q. According to your statement, you went outside to where

4 you had parked the Peckham fire engines?

5 A. Echo 372's pump, yeah.

6 Q. Which was on the west side of the building?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Can you help the jury by giving them a flavour of how

9 physically demanding it had been in flat 65 and what you

10 felt like now that you had carried out that task until

11 you ran low on air and had gone out of the building?

12 A. You want me to explain how I felt at the time? Well,

13 it's just heat -- the heat was quite unreal, to be fair.

14 And you're working hard, obviously, being on the front

15 of the jet extinguishing the bedrooms, which we thought

16 were the bedrooms and the living room area at the time.

17 It was just hot conditions. The conditions were hot,

18 which is why we worked as hard as we could and then had

19 to hand over, because the harder you work, the more air

20 you're taking in. That's all I can really say about it,

21 to be fair.

22 Q. Your statement says that you went to a grass area

23 opposite the block, you took off your BA kit and your

24 tunics and you had a drink of water?

25 A. Yes, that was to cool down.

1 Q. Were you still on the west side of the building?

2 A. That's correct.

3 Q. So you had a view of where your appliance was and you

4 had a view of the side of the building where you had

5 been tackling the fire?

6 A. That's correct.

7 Q. Is it right that you then noticed that the fire had

8 progressed in that there were now more flats on fire?

9 A. That's correct.

10 Q. So there's one on the 5th floor, where a water jet was

11 being used to try and extinguish it, and another one on

12 the 11th floor, above the flat you'd been in?

13 A. Yeah, there was one above and one below. I couldn't

14 recall exactly what floors they were, but there was one

15 above and one below, yes.

16 Q. Then there came a time when you went round to entry

17 control on the other side of the building?

18 A. That's correct.

19 Q. I'll just show you a photograph to see if this is what

20 we're talking about. If you look at that photograph,

21 you can just see where I'm pointing with the cursor,

22 there's a staircase?

23 A. That's correct.

24 Q. And that's the bottom of the central staircase, isn't

25 it?

1 A. Yeah.

2 Q. You can see in the foreground there's a tree and a large
3 number of firefighters gathered around it. Was the
4 entry control point that you're talking about somewhere
5 round there?

6 A. Yeah, that's correct. As far as I know, that's correct.
7 That's where everyone was being briefed their task and
8 what they were to do when they went inside the building.

9 Q. According to your statement, you spoke with Crew Manager
10 Dennis, you then went back to your appliance on the west
11 side of the building and did an A test on your BA
12 equipment?

13 A. A fire ground A test.

14 Q. That's to check that it's suitable to be reused; is that
15 right?

16 A. That's correct.

17 Q. Then you kitted up again and returned to the control
18 area, in other words back to where we see in this
19 photograph?

20 A. That's correct.

21 Q. Do you recall carrying out any tasks between the period
22 when you came out of the building needing to cool off
23 and the period when, as we're going to come to, you then
24 went back into the building, were committed back in?

25 A. Apart from doing my fire ground A, I cooled down,

1 rehydrated, went round to the entry control point on the
2 east side of the building to be briefed on another --
3 another task or to help in any way I could, which --
4 then I was instructed to do the fire ground A and come
5 back in my BA set, to wait to be briefed on my next
6 task.

7 Q. You know who David Sharpe is, I think, because he's
8 a colleague of yours from Peckham fire station?

9 A. That's correct.

10 Q. Do you remember having any contact with him in between
11 when you came out of the building and when you were
12 recommitted back into it?

13 A. Not to my knowledge.

14 Q. Turning then to when you went back into the building,
15 the statement says you were directed to start searching
16 the 3rd floor with two firefighters from Greenwich?

17 A. That's correct.

18 Q. Do you remember their names?

19 A. No.

20 Q. If I mention a couple of names just to see if they ring
21 any bells with you. John?

22 A. No, no name -- I didn't get their names.

23 Q. Never got their names. I'm going to show you a document
24 that might assist with helping us to identify the time
25 when you might have gone back into the building. What

1 I've got up on screen is the same type of document as
2 the one we've looked at for you, but this is for crews
3 from Greenwich fire station. If you look at it, it
4 indicates that the first pair of firefighters from
5 Greenwich to be committed into the building went in
6 together at 18.04, they being Mr Waters and Mr Izod,
7 John Waters and Stefan Izod. Do you think that it would
8 have been about 6.05 when you went back into the
9 building, tasked with searching the third floor, or are
10 you not able to say?

11 A. From the downloaded document it says I went in at 18.05,
12 which would have been the same time as those two
13 firefighters from Greenwich, so I'm guessing -- I'm not
14 guessing. That seems -- that seems about right, yes.

15 Q. And you think that's consistent with your recollection
16 of the gap in time between when you came out of the
17 building at about 5.45, and then the time before you
18 went back in, 6.05?

19 A. It -- it could have been, yeah, because they would have
20 used firefighters that hadn't gone in at all before
21 they'd use someone else that needed a second wear. It
22 seems correct.

23 Q. In that gap in time between coming out of the building,
24 having worn a BA, and then being recommitted back into
25 the building, did anyone from the London Fire Brigade

1 who was a more senior rank than firefighter talk to you
2 about what had happened in the building?

3 A. I can't -- I can't recall speaking to anyone about that,
4 no.

5 Q. Do you think that if that sort of conversation had taken
6 place, you would remember it?

7 A. Well, I would have passed on the information to entry
8 control when I handed over, did my debrief, and that
9 would have been passed on to whoever was in charge of
10 the job at the time.

11 Q. So the only conversation you recall that was of
12 a debrief-type nature was what you said to the entry
13 control officer?

14 A. That's correct.

15 Q. Then, in terms of what you did when you were wearing
16 breathing apparatus a second time, you went to the 3rd
17 floor and you began searching, knocking in doors to make
18 sure that flats were empty?

19 A. That's correct.

20 Q. And you helped a black lady and a young boy and girl out
21 of the building; is that right?

22 A. That's correct.

23 Q. You became low on air again and therefore withdrew from
24 the building?

25 A. That's correct.

1 Q. Your work was still not done for the day, because you
2 asked if you could help a crew from Greenwich with their
3 aerial ladder platform outside?

4 A. That's correct.

5 Q. You put on a harness and went up the ladder of the
6 aerial ladder platform?

7 A. There was a cage on the front.

8 Q. The statement says "began firefighting", so using a hose
9 again from outside the building; is that right?

10 A. Using the hose that's attached to the ALP.

11 Q. And at some point while you were on the ALP, you saw
12 casualties coming out of the building, being taken to
13 ambulances, and people performing CPR on them?

14 A. That's correct.

15 Q. Mr Fournier, as a final question, you're somebody who
16 was there from the very beginning. You went into the
17 building twice wearing breathing apparatus and engaged
18 in further firefighting. Looking back now, can you
19 assist the court with what single additional thing you
20 think would have helped you most on the day to carry out
21 the tasks that you attempted to carry out?

22 A. What the tasks I carried out personally?

23 Q. Yes. Anything that would have made things easier for
24 you?

25 A. I can't think of anything that would have made it

1 easier.

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

3 THE CORONER: Thank you. Mr Hendy?

4 Questions from MR HENDY

5 MR HENDY: Good morning, Mr Fournier. My name's Hendy,

6 I represent three of the bereaved families. Just a few
7 questions. First of all, can I ask you when you started
8 as a firefighter, what year?

9 A. 2007.

10 Q. 2007. So you'd had two years' training and service by
11 the time of this fire?

12 A. That's correct.

13 Q. Had you fought in a high rise fire before?

14 A. No.

15 Q. You explained to Mr Maxwell-Scott how, when you first
16 got to the 7th floor, you asked for the pressure to be
17 set on the hose. As I understand it, that's radioing
18 down to the pump and asking for so many bars pressure.
19 Would that be right?

20 A. The -- the dry riser would have been charged.

21 Q. Yes?

22 A. So we would have taken the charge from there.

23 Q. Right much?

24 A. So that's down to the pump operator to charge it.

25 Q. Just to explain to the jury, the reason that these, what

1 we call fire engines, are called "pumps" is that they
2 apply pressure to the water which has been taken out of
3 the mains, out of the hydrant, to push it into the dry
4 rising main, which then comes off through your hoses to
5 the jets of the engine?

6 A. No, the hydrant goes into the pump, the pump goes into
7 the dry riser, and then we take from the 7th floor, from
8 the outlet, that way.

9 Q. Yes, and the pump determines what pressure is going to
10 be in the dry riser?

11 A. That's correct.

12 Q. Normally it's 10 bars, 10-atmospheres of pressure?

13 A. That's correct.

14 Q. I think we've heard evidence that later it was asked
15 whether it could be made 13 bars, and that was done, but
16 10 bars would be the normal fighting pressure?

17 A. That's correct.

18 Q. Thank you. You explained how after your first
19 firefighting you checked on air supply and your
20 colleagues were low on air. You'd had, as we've seen
21 from the table, 15 minutes, so you personally weren't,
22 in fact, low on air; would that be right?

23 A. If he was low on air, then I was.

24 Q. Yes. We know you switched off your BA set on that first
25 occasion at 16.48, just after 4.45. On your witness

1 statement -- I wonder if we could just put that up.
2 It's page 118. Perhaps I can just read it to ease
3 Mr Maxwell-Scott's task. When you said was:

4 "When we came out of the block, there was now a jet
5 running which aimed at a flat on the 5th floor. I could
6 see another flat above the flat on the 9th floor was now
7 alight."

8 I just wanted to ask you about that jet which was
9 aimed at a flat on the 5th floor. That's a jet from
10 outside the building at ground level on the west side,
11 being aimed at the flat on the 5th floor which was
12 alight?

13 A. That's correct.

14 Q. So that jet was therefore running by a few minutes after
15 4.45, when you'd switched off your BA and come out of
16 the building?

17 A. From my recollection, yes, yeah.

18 Q. You went in a second time and in your statement, you
19 say:

20 "We became low on air and made our way back down to
21 the entry control."

22 I wonder if we could just look at the advocates'
23 bundle, page 1037 -- you probably still have it open --
24 which is the chart of BA times. The jury, I don't
25 think, have it in front of them. They have it on the

1 screens now. If we look three names up from the second
2 column on the right-hand side, we see your name,
3 "Fournier", and we can see the two BA wearings that day.
4 The second one, as you pointed out, 18.05.28, that's
5 when you switched on, 18.15.08, when you switched off.
6 Yes?

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. I just wanted to clarify: is that normal? That's 14
9 minutes and 40 seconds. Would you normally expect a BA
10 set to be low on air after such a period of time?

11 A. Are you talking about the first wear or the second wear?

12 Q. Sorry, the second wear. I said it's 14 minutes; it's
13 not, is it? It's nine minutes and 40 seconds.

14 A. Well, I was using the enforcer, which, if you've used
15 one before, is pretty heavy and pretty hard work when
16 you're trying to put doors in for your colleagues to
17 search the rooms.

18 Q. Yes, I can understand that.

19 A. So at that rate, the amount of -- I'd say there was ten,
20 maybe 12 doors per -- as you come through each door,
21 putting them in -- it's not just one hit. They don't
22 just go over with one hilt. Some might, some not, but
23 it's pretty hard work trying to do that.

24 Q. I can well imagine that and the terrible heat as well.
25 It must be absolutely exhausting. But that's the sort

1 of expectancy that the jury might expect from a BA set,
2 an ordinary BA set, in very heavy work in very hot
3 conditions, something a bit less than ten minutes?

4 A. I can't give you an answer for that.

5 Q. Well, you're an experienced firefighter. Does that seem
6 accurate to you or is it something --

7 A. It depends on -- it seems like a short amount of time,
8 but you're working hard. It's my second wear, so I'd
9 already had a wear before, so I'm using up more air and
10 working just as hard.

11 THE CORONER: Mr Fournier, I don't think anyone's trying to
12 criticise you for this at all. We're just trying to --

13 A. No, I'm trying to --

14 THE CORONER: Just one moment. All we're trying to do is to
15 understand the sort of timescales that we ought to be
16 understanding here, to be expecting. That's all we're
17 trying to do.

18 MR HENDY: It's not just you, Mr Fournier. I'm interested
19 in the equipment that you guys are provided with, and if
20 the situation is that it's not unusual for BA sets to be
21 exhausted or come near exhaustion within ten minutes or
22 so. The jury ought to know that. Do you see the point?

23 A. I can understand what you're saying.

24 Q. Yes. So can I just push you a little bit further: is
25 this absolutely astonishing, or is it not unusual? Is

1 it within the range of your expectation?

2 A. I don't think it's unusual for the work rate at the
3 time, no.

4 Q. Thank you. You finished with that set at just after
5 6.15. You say in your statement that you then made your
6 way out of the building, removed your BA sets, put them
7 back on the machine. No doubt you had a drink of water
8 at that stage?

9 A. Most probably, yeah.

10 Q. And then you say:

11 "I went back round to the front of the building,
12 where we first pulled up. There was now a Greenwich
13 aerial ladder platform, ALP. I asked if I could assist
14 the crew on the ALP. I put a harness on and went up the
15 ladder and began firefighting."

16 Can I just ask you about that. I'm sorry,
17 Mr Maxwell-Scott, but I wonder if we could look at the
18 jury bundle, tab 11, page 4. Perhaps we don't need to
19 put it on the screen because the jury obviously has the
20 bundle and Mr Clark's very kindly providing a copy for
21 you, Mr Fournier. (Handed)

22 Just orientate yourself with that map if you would,
23 Mr Fournier. You have in pink Lakanal House, running
24 more or less north to south. We have the west side on
25 the left hand side of the page. That's the side on

1 which the afternoon sun was falling. We have the east
2 side in shadow on the right hand side of the page. We
3 have Dalwood Street running west to east along the top
4 there. I just want to see if we can identify where the
5 Greenwich ALP was. Do you see Sedgmoor Place marked on
6 the map?

7 A. That's correct.

8 Q. Do you have that? Sedgmoor Place follows down to run
9 parallel to Lakanal House, doesn't it?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Am I right in thinking that the Greenwich ALP was
12 situated in that turning by the side of Lakanal House?

13 A. That's correct.

14 Q. By the time you had put your harness on and gone up the
15 ladder and began firefighting, can we assume that it
16 must have been at least ten minutes, perhaps a little
17 bit longer, so it might have been 6.30 or something of
18 that order?

19 A. I don't know the exact time, but to set up the ALP and
20 put a harness on and then make your way up, probably ten
21 minutes sounds about right.

22 Q. Well, the jury don't have this but the advocates have,
23 and just for their assistance I'll give them the
24 reference. Dr Mansi's report at page 74 says that the
25 Greenwich ALP arrived at 17.47, but then, of course, it

1 would have to be positioned, its extending legs put out,
2 raised off the ground for stability, its ladder extended
3 and so on. So it would be a little bit of time after
4 that; would that be right?

5 A. Sounds right.

6 Q. Sounds right. Now, you went up that ladder and began
7 firefighting; am I right? I've seen a video of this,
8 the jury haven't, but we may be able to get some photos
9 later. But in the absence of that, just help me: am
10 I right in saying that the platform which carries the
11 hosing and indeed the firefighters, including yourself,
12 went up to about the 8th floor, or the level of the 8th
13 floor, and directed its jet downwards onto the 7th
14 floor?

15 A. That would have been correct. That would have been down
16 to the operator of the ATL at the time. I wasn't the
17 operator; I was just assisting.

18 Q. Right. In the absence of photographs, does that sound
19 about right?

20 A. We were directing the jet down -- downwards into one of
21 the flats. I wouldn't be able to tell you what floor it
22 was at the time. It would have been down to the ALP
23 operator.

24 Q. But it was downwards?

25 A. A downwards jet, yeah.

1 Q. Thank you. Am I right in saying that the hose on the
2 ALP and the jet through which the water comes is
3 a 70-millimetre hose?

4 A. That's correct.

5 Q. As opposed to the 45-millimetre hoses that you were
6 using inside the block of flats, taken off the high
7 rising main?

8 A. That's correct.

9 Q. Just one last thing. I don't suppose you can help me on
10 this: do you know which hydrant the water supply to the
11 Greenwich aerial ladder pump came from?

12 A. I don't, no.

13 Q. Thank you very much indeed.

14 MR DOWDEN: No questions.

15 THE CORONER: Thank you. Ms Al Tai.

16 Questions from MS AL TAI

17 MS AL TAI: Good morning, Mr Fournier. I act on behalf of
18 Mark Bailey, Catherine Hickman's partner.

19 THE CORONER: Sorry, could you go closer to the microphone
20 please.

21 MS AL TAI: I apologise. I just have one question for you,
22 Mr Fournier. You gave evidence earlier this morning
23 that when you entered flat 65 the door fell away. Did
24 you form any conclusions when that happened?

25 A. That it was hot behind the door. For a door to go in

1 like that it would have been really, really hot behind
2 the door.

3 Q. Had you seen that occur before?

4 A. I've never seen anything like that before, no.

5 Q. I'm assuming that you've been in conditions that are as
6 hot as that?

7 A. It was one of my -- I haven't been in conditions that
8 hot, no, apart from training school at the time, where
9 it's controlled conditions. This wasn't controlled
10 conditions, obviously.

11 Q. Thank you, Mr Fournier.

12 THE CORONER: Thank you. Mr Matthews?

13 MR MATTHEWS: No thank you.

14 THE CORONER: Mr Compton?

15 MR COMPTON: No thank you.

16 THE CORONER: Mr Walsh.

17 Questions from MR WALSH

18 MR WALSH: Thank you very much. Just very briefly. I ask
19 questions on behalf of the London Fire Brigade. You
20 mentioned that when you went up the first time in order
21 to fight the fire, that your colleagues' air was low,
22 lower than yours, and that is why you left; is that
23 right?

24 A. That's correct.

25 Q. You had to leave with him, did you not, because it's

1 essential that firefighters work in pairs in those
2 circumstances?

3 A. That's correct.

4 Q. You couldn't have remained there on your own?

5 A. No.

6 Q. Now, when you came out and you cooled down and you
7 rehydrated, you say you went back to the machine to
8 carry out the fire ground A test. I'm not sure you've
9 been asked this, but can you just help us with exactly
10 what the fire ground A test is?

11 A. That would be changing the empty cylinder for a new
12 cylinder and then testing it to make sure the set is up
13 to standard to go back in if need be.

14 Q. And you do that back at your machine, carry out the fire
15 ground A test and then go back ready to be deployed if
16 you're needed?

17 A. That's correct.

18 Q. In relation to the use of the cylinders -- we've heard
19 some evidence about this already -- as to the length of
20 time that a person will gain from the cylinder, it
21 depends upon the person and upon the work load that
22 they're doing, doesn't it?

23 A. That's correct.

24 Q. It can vary quite substantially?

25 A. That's correct.

1 Q. All right. Thank you very much.

2 THE CORONER: Members of the jury, do you have any questions
3 for Mr Fournier? Thank you very much.

4 Mr Fournier, thank you very much for coming and
5 thank you very much for the help that you've given us
6 today. You're welcome to stay if you'd like, but you're
7 free to go if you'd prefer.

8 A. Thank you.

9 THE CORONER: Thank you.

10 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Madam, the next witness is Lyndan Simons.

11 THE CORONER: Yes, would you like to come forward,
12 Mr Simons.

13 LYNDAN SIMONS (sworn)

14 THE CORONER: Thank you, Mr Simons. Do sit down. Do help
15 yourself to a glass of water. As you probably heard me
16 ask Mr Fournier, please could you make sure that you
17 speak close to the microphone. I think it might help
18 you to do that if you faced towards the jurors when
19 you're asking questions rather than facing back into the
20 fore. All right? Mr Maxwell-Scott, who's standing up,
21 is going to ask you questions initially on my behalf,
22 and then there'll be some questions from others.

23 A. Okay.

24 THE CORONER: Thank you.

25

1 Questions from MR MAXWELL-SCOTT

2 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Good morning. Can you give the court
3 your full name please.

4 A. Lyndan John Simons.

5 Q. I'm going to be asking you questions about your
6 knowledge of Lakanal House and your involvement in
7 fighting the fire there on 3 July 2009. At the time of
8 that fire, is it right that you had been a serving
9 firefighter for approximately 21 years?

10 A. That's correct.

11 Q. And you still work for the London Fire Brigade today?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. Unless I indicate otherwise, my questions today will be
14 directed to how things were done on or before the date
15 of the fire. We've heard that there are a range of
16 reasons why a firefighter might visit a building like
17 Lakanal House. They include an operational incident --
18 not necessarily a fire -- a home fire safety visit, and
19 a familiarisation visit, sometimes known as a 72D visit.

20 A. (The witness nodded)

21 Q. That's your understanding as well?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. Can you tell us as best you remember for which of those
24 reasons you'd previously visited Lakanal House?

25 A. Yeah, I've been to a paladin fire, shut in lifts and

1 I had been when home fire safety visits have been done
2 and 72Ds, but being a driver, I normally wait outside on
3 the machine listening to the radio, because we were very
4 low on drivers for quite a few years.

5 Q. So you've driven fire engines to Lakanal for all of
6 those purposes?

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. To what extent had you been in the communal areas of the
9 building before 3 July, so far as you remember?

10 A. For shut in lifts, mainly, people shut in the lift
11 there.

12 Q. As far as you remember, had you ever been inside a flat?

13 A. No.

14 Q. Had you been inside the building?

15 A. Yes, I've been into the lobby area where the lifts were
16 and also next to that lobby area is where the paladins
17 were, so when we've had a paladin fire there we've
18 pulled them out and put them out.

19 THE CORONER: By "paladin", do you mean rubbish?

20 A. Yes.

21 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: And the areas you're describing, is it
22 right they're both at ground floor level?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. Had you ever, as far as you remember, been higher up in
25 the building?

1 A. I can't remember. I don't think I had been.

2 Q. I'll show you a photograph of the ground floor area by
3 the lifts. This is the ground floor near the two lift
4 shafts as it was at the time of the fire, in that there
5 was one that was operational and one that was not
6 operational. Does that refresh your memory at all of
7 what this area looks like?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Do you see that above the lifts there's a sign on the
10 wall, which I'll show you a close-up picture of now,
11 which is here? You would have been in that area before
12 3 July 2009; is that right?

13 A. Yes, yes.

14 Q. Would you have remembered, do you think, that there was
15 a sign like that there?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. It wouldn't be unusual to have a sign by the lifts at
18 ground floor level --

19 A. No.

20 Q. -- of that nature, telling you something about the
21 number of floors and where to find flats within the
22 building?

23 A. That's correct, yeah.

24 Q. I'm going to turn now to asking you questions about the
25 fire itself on 3 July and what you did. It's right,

1 I think, that you were on duty at Peckham fire station
2 when a call came in to mobilise, and both appliances
3 from the fire station mobilised immediately and drove in
4 convoy to Lakanal House?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. Is it right that before you got there you knew that you
7 were going to a fire as opposed to attending for some
8 other reason?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. And that it was a fire on the 9th floor in Flat 65?

11 A. We knew it was a fire on the 9th floor, and I think the
12 information was on the calls that it was Flat 65.

13 Q. Mr Simons, you made a witness statement on 11 July 2009,
14 so just over a week after the fire. Was your memory of
15 events better then than it is today?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. Would it help you to have the opportunity to look at
18 that statement now?

19 A. Yes, please.

20 Q. If that could be provided. It starts at page 120 in the
21 statements bundle. (Handed) If you look at that first
22 page, do you recognise that as your statement, dated
23 11 July 2009?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. Just turning over to the second page of it, in the

1 second paragraph, you say that the calls came out to
2 flat 65 on the 9th floor. So that was your recollection
3 back in July 2009. Then you refer to previous visits to
4 Lakanal, previous call outs. In the middle of that
5 page, let me ask you about this paragraph, where you
6 say:

7 "I've also attended the Lakanal block to carry out
8 dry riser checks. This would require us to attend and
9 go onto each floor and make sure the dry risers were in
10 working order."

11 A. That's correct.

12 Q. Is it your evidence today that you personally, during
13 such visits, didn't go up onto the higher floors and
14 check the dry riser; your colleagues did?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. When you arrived at Lakanal, you parked close to the
17 stairwell where the dry riser was situated, and you
18 already noticed both a strong smell of smoke and falling
19 debris; is that right?

20 A. Yes, I had smelt smoke as we left the station.

21 Q. The statement says you saw glass landing on the floor
22 and strips of metal crashing down, and you heard debris
23 hitting the top of the ladder of the pump?

24 A. That's correct.

25 Q. We know that your fire engine arrived within under three

1 minutes of being mobilised?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. Were you surprised on arrival that there was glass
4 falling down and debris falling from the building and
5 landing on the top of the pump?

6 A. Yes. Can I also say that echo 371 was in front of
7 echo 372, and as I was looking through the cab, I could
8 see debris falling onto that fire engine as well as it
9 drew past the stairwell.

10 Q. And that was a hazard that you had to all take into
11 account when deciding how to proceed?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. Your statement says that you arrived already rigged
14 wearing your personal protection equipment?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. Is that a reference to wearing your BA equipment, or to
17 something else?

18 A. Yes, no, that's rigged in breathing apparatus.

19 Q. You put it on in the fire engine?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. You collected the enforcer from the engine. Your
22 colleague, Mr Fournier, has already explained to the
23 jury what that is.

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. You made your way up to form a bridgehead on the 7th

1 floor?

2 A. Yes, we'd taken the relative equipment for high rise in
3 the lift with us. It wasn't just the enforcer; there
4 was three lengths of hose, you know, a BA board, you
5 know. And the lift itself could only facilitate me,
6 Firefighter Fournier and Crew Manager Dennis, so
7 Firefighter Badger, who made up the other -- the fourth
8 member of our team, ran -- was running the stairs,
9 basically, because it was a very small lift.

10 Q. So the four of you went into the building essentially
11 together?

12 A. Yeah.

13 Q. Mr Dennis, yourself, Mr Fournier and Mr Badger?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. You got as much equipment as you could into the lift,
16 and that left room for only three of you?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. And Mr Badger --

19 A. We were standing on the equipment to --

20 Q. Mr Badger was the unfortunate fourth who had to take the
21 stairs?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. You took the lift up to the 7th floor and got out there;
24 is that right?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. Your statement says that as you left the lift you saw
2 a woman dressed in an burqa coming out of a the flat on
3 the right side of the corridor?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. I'll show you photographs if necessary, but when you say
6 the right side of the corridor, do you mean one corridor
7 rather than another corridor leading off from the lift
8 lobby, or do you mean a side of one of the corridors?

9 A. No, the corridor to the right of the stairwell. The
10 fire was on the left of the stairwell, and she came out
11 from the right, the other side.

12 Q. So --

13 THE CORONER: Sorry, Mr Simons, could you just keep your
14 voice up when you are giving your evidence.

15 A. Sorry.

16 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: When you're in the lift lobby area --

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. -- you have access through security doors with,
19 ordinarily, door entry panels to two corridors?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. Running in opposite directions from that central area?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. And what you're saying is that you knew the fire was in
24 a flat in one of those corridors?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. And she came from the other corridor?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. The other side of the central lobby?

4 A. The other side of the central.

5 Q. Do you happen to know which flat she came from?

6 A. No.

7 Q. Did you see which door she came out of?

8 A. It would have been on the 7th floor, the door that leads

9 to the right hand side of that stairwell.

10 Q. Your statement says that she appeared to be pregnant?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Did you see whether there was anyone else with her, any

13 children, or was she on her own?

14 A. As far as I can remember, she was on her own.

15 Q. When you then spoke to her, did you speak to her in her

16 corridor or in the central lobby area by the lifts?

17 A. It was in the central lobby area.

18 Q. Your statement says that she spoke good English, she was

19 aware of the fire, and you reassured her and told her to

20 go back into her flat and close all her doors and

21 windows, and you told her that she was on the opposite

22 side to the fire?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. Can you help the jury with why you gave her that advice

25 to go back into her flat?

1 A. Because that was the safest place for her. At that
2 time, the lift was being used for firefighting.
3 I didn't want to send her down seven floors, and at that
4 time, as far as I was concerned, we were dealing with
5 a compartment fire on the other side of the building.

6 Q. Your statement says that at that time there was no smoke
7 in the corridor of the 7th floor but there was a strong
8 smell of smoke?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. Is that your recollection?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. And you noticed that there was smoke in the stairwell?

13 A. Yes, there was smoke starting to percolate down the
14 stairwell as well, as I can remember.

15 Q. At what level?

16 A. Well, we were on the 7th floor then. It wasn't a thick
17 smoke, but obviously the smoke we're talking about is
18 very -- there's a very strong smell, so the smell of
19 smoke and starting to see, you know, wispy smoke coming
20 down.

21 Q. So following the story through, she presumably went back
22 into her flat, did she?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. And you went from the lift lobby area into the stairwell
25 itself?

1 A. Yes, we're in the stairwell on the 7th, yeah, at this
2 point.

3 Q. Getting ready to take a hose up to the 9th floor to
4 fight the fire?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. And it was in that stairwell on the 7th floor that you
7 noticed some smoke?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Mr Fournier was in front of you on the hose and you were
10 supporting him behind?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Your statement says you had the communications on your
13 BA. Just explain what that means?

14 A. There's a -- a radio with a press-on switch and
15 a microphone inside the BA mask and an earpiece so I can
16 hear messages coming back to me.

17 Q. Is that something you had which wasn't standard, which
18 not everybody had?

19 A. No, there was one per machine, and so the BA team would
20 be made up of a comms and a BA wearer.

21 Q. Your statement, at the top of page 123, says that as you
22 were making your way up the stairs between the 7th and
23 8th floors, you saw a young black man wearing a beige
24 top coming up the stairs behind you. He was on his
25 mobile phone and he informed you that his sister was in

1 the flat next to the flat that was on fire, she had
2 asthma and her kids were with her?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Do you remember that now?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. And that's essentially what he said?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. What did you understand by "the flat next to the flat
9 that was on fire"?

10 A. At this time we were actually still manoeuvring the hose
11 from the 7th floor to the 9th floor, obviously
12 uncharged, but it has to be -- we're running up and down
13 from each landing, putting the hose round, because
14 obviously it jams, so, you know, this is quite
15 an intensive job, and it was at this point that this guy
16 turned up, so I stopped him and -- he was going to go up
17 to the 9th and I asked him not to. I actually begged
18 him not to, because by now the smoke had started to
19 become a little bit more -- there was a little bit more
20 smoke in -- in the stairwell, and so I said to him, you
21 know: "We're going to put the fire out, and then
22 we're -- you know, we'll get the fire out and then we'll
23 get your sister out", basically.

24 Q. That's very helpful. Back to this idea of what he might
25 have meant by "the flat next to the flat that was on

1 fire"?

2 A. Yeah.

3 Q. Because you hadn't yet been in the corridor?

4 A. No, we were still --

5 Q. You were assuming that he meant a flat that had a shared
6 wall with the flat that was on fire. Is that what you
7 would have assumed?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Your statement says that you told him to tell his sister
10 to stay indoors?

11 A. I did, yes.

12 Q. In other words for him to pass that message on to her
13 using his mobile phone?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Just looking at the facts that he's relayed, it's the
16 flat with an adjoining wall to the flat with the fire.
17 She has asthma, she has children with her. To what
18 extent is the advice you give her to stay indoors
19 something that you think about and consider, bearing all
20 those facts in mind, or to what extent is it essentially
21 automatic advice that you would give in a situation like
22 this because it's a different flat?

23 A. Yeah, that was policy, that people were told to stay.
24 I'd used that policy before in other high rise
25 incidents.

1 Q. So it's simply a question of the policy being: if
2 they're in a different flat, we tell them to stay. The
3 fact that they might bring in factors which wouldn't
4 always be the case, such as having asthma and having
5 children with her, you wouldn't particularly reflect
6 upon and consider: "Should I change what I'm going to
7 say?"

8 A. No.

9 Q. It's a fairly simple process you were going through.
10 They are in a different flat?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. The advice is: "Stay where you are"?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. He took that advice?

15 A. He did, yes.

16 Q. He told her that over the phone?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. And he went back downstairs himself?

19 A. He went back down, as far as I know, to the bridgehead.

20 Q. Did you come across any other residents on the stairs?

21 A. No.

22 Q. Did you see any other residents coming from a higher
23 level down the stairs?

24 A. I think before we had started up -- because you must
25 remember we're under air now, we'd started up. Before

1 that, we had seen residents coming down and they --
2 I think Jim Badger may have led them out. A lot had
3 happened in a very short amount of time, you know.

4 Q. I understand.

5 A. So I can't exactly remember specifically seeing other
6 people. I specifically remember the lady in the burqa
7 and this guy who was going up to try and go to the fire
8 floor.

9 Q. So you didn't, for example, see anyone coming down the
10 stairs and tell them to go back up to their flats?

11 A. No.

12 Q. Did you overhear any of your colleagues or see any of
13 your colleagues have that kind of conversation which
14 resulted in somebody going back upstairs?

15 A. No. I think I need to say that the lady in the burqa
16 wasn't coming down the stairs; she had come out from her
17 corridor. I think if someone was coming down, you know,
18 you wouldn't send them back up. The fact is that she
19 had come out of her own level to see what had -- you
20 know, obviously understand there was a fire, yes.

21 Q. Moving on to what happened when you reached the 9th
22 floor, we've heard already from your colleague
23 Mr Fournier that there was a moment when the hose got
24 stuck under a door and that problem had to be solved.
25 Was that a major or a minor problem?

1 A. Well, before that, there was a viewing panel, and when I
2 looked through the viewing panel I could see that there
3 was smoke tumbling in that corridor, behind the view
4 panel.

5 Q. Let me just show you the photograph.

6 A. Sure. Yes, that's it. Looking through that safety
7 glass panel, I could see smoke tumbling in that
8 corridor.

9 Q. So we're talking about you now being on the 9th floor?

10 A. I'm on the 9th floor.

11 Q. Looking through into the corridor where the fire has
12 started?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. And you could see smoke?

15 A. Yes, it was a lot of smoke, yes.

16 Q. Did you appreciate at the time that those doors allow
17 air and therefore smoke through the grill that you could
18 see?

19 A. I can't actually see a grill there. If you're referring
20 to the grill on the actual stairwell -- oh, no, that
21 is -- that was safety glass there. I don't think that's
22 a grill. That's actual glass.

23 Q. I think it is a grill but it doesn't matter. I'm asking
24 about your recollection at the time. But you could see
25 smoke tumbling through the corridor?

1 A. Yes, black smoke, yeah.

2 Q. That was before you then used the drop key to get that
3 door open?

4 A. Yes, I said to Charlie that the corridor was compromised
5 to some extent, for whatever reason, and that we would
6 do some door procedure, which would be opening the door
7 in an safe manner to make sure that it would be safe to
8 enter. So with a charged hose, the door is opened, and
9 we have a look before we proceed. And then we open
10 a door, we look down -- I remember saying to Charlie:
11 "Just use the spray and squirt it into that smoke to
12 cool the smoke, in case it was at a heat level where it
13 could ignite." We'd done that, had a look and then
14 opened the door and started to make our way through.

15 Q. The door you've just described, is that the door of
16 flat 65?

17 A. No, that door into that corridor. That door into that
18 corridor, yes.

19 Q. Then came the point when the hose was temporarily stuck?

20 A. It was, yes, because again, you know, there's two of us.
21 I remember saying to Charlie: "We need to find the door
22 to the flat", basically. I know it sounds obvious, but
23 we need to confirm the fire door -- the fire flat. So
24 we've -- one of us held the door open, pulled the hose,
25 and then the door -- basically, somehow it slammed over

1 the hose, right underneath the door. It actually wedged
2 the door open, but we had no pressure at our branch.
3 The water was then stopped at the -- at the point where
4 the door had, you know, shut over it.

5 Q. Did that cause a major problem or just a minor hiccup?

6 A. That is something, you know -- I mean, these are the
7 things that -- at all fires, there may be something that
8 will hinder your process, and it was just a case of
9 dealing with that, and that was dealt with by --
10 I called down to the bridgehead on the 7th, which is
11 where the outlet from the dry riser is, and I knew it
12 would be isolated there, so we switched the pressure off
13 at the bridgehead, we released the pressure at the
14 branch and then freed the hose.

15 Q. What were the smoke conditions like in the corridor
16 immediately before you went into flat 65, where the fire
17 was?

18 A. Yeah, no -- yeah, there was a lot of smoke there now,
19 yeah. Maybe down to a metre above the ground.

20 Q. So it was smokey everywhere except for at a very low
21 level?

22 A. Yeah.

23 Q. What happened to the front door of flat 65?

24 A. Okay, we made our way along, and then I noticed the top
25 of the door had been burnt away and there were some

1 flames coming from this -- it was like a wedge at the
2 top of the door had been burnt away and there were some
3 flames coming through. Earlier on, I had noticed that
4 it was a very warm day and that everyone had their
5 windows open, and there was like a prevailing wind that
6 was blowing onto there, because when we was in the
7 stairwell, the wind was blowing the smoke into the
8 stairwell, so I knew that behind there there was this
9 prevailing wind, like, you know, kind of pressurising
10 this flat to some extent, and it seemed like -- you
11 know, at this point, with the compromised door at the
12 top and the smoke and flames coming in, I was quite
13 aware of the fact that that was the windward side of the
14 building.

15 Q. What happened to the door of flat 65?

16 A. Okay, I mean, I recall this slightly different to
17 Firefighter Fournier. At that point, the two of us had
18 moved this hose from the 7th floor to the 9th floor,
19 pulling it round the corners. I'd spoken to this lad.
20 We'd then got up there and I opened the -- I mean, it
21 was a bit of an old school thing to do, but I opened the
22 letterbox and I looked in, because I wanted to know if
23 that fire was fully developed or not, and when I opened
24 the letterbox and looked in, it was a fully developed
25 fire.

1 So now you have to make an entry into this flat.
2 Because we were pulling the hose up -- you can't
3 physically carry a 14-kilo enforcer with you and run
4 from floor to floor pulling the hose around, so
5 I shouted down to John Dennis: "Get the enforcer." He
6 came up with the enforcer. I remember now the smoke
7 being very low, because he lay down on the 9th floor and
8 pushed the enforcer to me. I took the enforcer off him
9 and turned round and by that time the door itself had
10 basically fallen off of the hinges, burnt off of the
11 hinges and now the fire was coming into the -- into that
12 corridor. So the enforcer, in the end, wasn't needed.
13 Because to open that door was either a case of you
14 kicking that door -- but you don't -- from what I'd seen
15 of the top of the door burning, you don't want to be
16 kicking that door and then be standing facing straight
17 at it. You want to do a controlled opening, because
18 otherwise you're going to get yourselves in all kinds of
19 trouble.

20 So that was basically the sequence of events. The
21 enforcer itself wasn't used, the door burnt off its
22 hinges, and that's how we made an entry into there.

23 Q. What was your reaction when the front door fell in
24 without there being any force required?

25 A. Well, I was at the top of the stairs and I turned and

1 saw Charlie, and the door had gone in. So I left that
2 there and went and basically now, you know, the job has
3 been done for you. The door -- you now have an entry
4 into this fire flat. I remember the heat being
5 particularly intense. I remember Charlie saying to me,
6 you know, that it's hot, it's really, really hot. So
7 I said, "Charlie, get the jet on the spray. We've got
8 to protect ourselves from the heat", which is making
9 a spray, and we make our way in. So now the door is
10 basically laying two thirds of the way in. We push that
11 to the left. It might have been -- I think it was the
12 left, and we started to make our way in, protecting
13 ourselves with the -- with the spray of the jet.
14 Another thing I noticed was that initial hit of heat
15 then dissipated, because obviously there's that -- it's
16 all bottled up in there, and as the door has gone, the
17 first initial hit of heat and then everything kind of
18 settles down, you know, because now it's into the
19 corridor. And basically in we went, started to make our
20 way in.

21 Q. Madam, I notice it's 11.30. I don't know whether --

22 THE CORONER: If that's a convenient point to have a short
23 break, yes, thank you very much.

24 Mr Simons, we're going to have a short break, so
25 please be ready to come back in five to ten minutes.

1 Because we're part way through your evidence, you must
2 not talk to anyone at all about this matter. Not within
3 this building, not outside the building, just not
4 anyone.

5 A. Yes.

6 THE CORONER: Yes, members of the jury, do leave your papers
7 behind if you want, if that's easier, and be back in
8 five to ten minutes.

9 (11.32 am)

10 (A short break)

11 (11.40 am)

12 THE CORONER: Thank you. Could we have the jury back in,
13 please.

14 (In the presence of the Jury)

15 THE CORONER: Thank you. Yes.

16 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Mr Simons, we had just reached the point
17 when you were entering flat 65 through the front door.
18 Can I remind you not to worry about looking at me when
19 I'm asking questions and to focus your answers to the
20 members of the jury and the coroner. That will assist
21 with keeping you close to the microphone and making sure
22 that everybody can hear what you have to say.

23 Once you had got into the flat, to what extent was
24 there a fully developed fire?

25 A. It was fully developed. The whole room that I looked

1 into was engulfed in flame.

2 Q. Mr Fournier was in front of you; is that right?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. How far in front of you would he be?

5 A. Never out of touching distance. In contact the whole

6 time, physical, so ...

7 Q. He's directing the water jet from the hose?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. And you're holding the hose as well?

10 A. Yes, to help with the jet reaction.

11 Q. In your statement you say:

12 "We began to put the fire out, working from our

13 right inside the flat."

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. "The flat appeared open plan. There was strong daylight

16 in front of us. We could see that the front of the

17 building had gone and was missing."

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. I'm just going to show you a photograph which won't

20 capture that adequately but it will give a sense of

21 things from outside the building. This is taken at

22 16.40, which I think is about eight minutes after you'd

23 started up your BA sets and therefore probably a time

24 when you were still within flat 65. Does that sound

25 right?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. Flat 65 is the lower flat that we can see in this
3 picture, with some white smoke coming out of it, perhaps
4 steam. Does that indicate firefighting activity inside
5 the flat?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. Do you see that there are panels, and in the flat I'm
8 now pointing to with my white arrow you can see a panel
9 intact, but where the fire started, this bedroom of
10 flat 65, you can see that that panel has essentially
11 burnt away, it's gone; is that right?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. And the window has gone?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. So you, inside that room, as you say in your statement,
16 had a sense that the building had gone and was missing?

17 A. Yes, I looked through before -- this would be steam.
18 Before that, it was engulfed and I looked through the
19 flames and saw daylight. It was a very sunny day.
20 I saw the daylight and I said to Charlie: "Mind your
21 footing. From what I can see, there's no front to this
22 flat, and we're on the 9th floor."

23 Q. He's in front of you?

24 A. He's just in front, and I actually grabbed his belt
25 because --

1 Q. You were worried he might get disoriented and
2 effectively fall out of the building?

3 A. No, no, I'm just making sure that my buddy is aware and,
4 you know -- yeah.

5 Q. We can all understand that. At what point in time did
6 you realise that the flat was on two floors?

7 A. As we made our way into that room and we started to put
8 the fire out to the right and then left, I looked round
9 and looked up -- you know, I'm always looking -- and
10 I can see it rolling over another floor above. You've
11 got that ceiling and then what was left of the stairs up
12 to a landing and then above that another ceiling, where
13 there was flames rolling across that ceiling. Great
14 yellow flames.

15 Q. How much success did you have in putting out the fire on
16 the ground floor?

17 A. Yes, yeah, it went out -- went out quickly. As it does
18 normally, they normally do. Once you're at the seat of
19 the fire and you get a 45-millimetre jet onto it at
20 10-bar, you're pretty much gonna put it out within not
21 much time at all.

22 Q. What, if anything, were you able to do about the fire
23 that you could see on the upper floor of the flat?

24 A. Okay, basically not a lot, because as far as I can
25 remember there was a panel -- I noticed on the stairs

1 that some glass had melted over the -- the risers of --
2 the stairs that used to go up to that floor. So I knew
3 at the top there that it was very hot, and I cleared
4 that glass off and then underneath the stairs were
5 basically burnt away. But that probably would have been
6 a glass panel at the upper ceiling level. Actually, at
7 the -- there's another glass panel, as far as I can
8 remember, where the top -- to stop someone falling down
9 into that room. You know, at the top of the stairs?
10 And that was still intact.

11 So we got tight onto the left hand wall, trying to
12 get the jet up into the upper floor, but that was
13 hindering us, so we were trying to bounce it off the
14 walls. And at this point, my BA comms wasn't operating.
15 Every time I operated it, I basically received -- the
16 only way I can describe it is feedback. Now, I've used
17 them before, so I had my personal radio with me, and
18 I used that and I got onto Crew Manager Willett, who
19 I knew was in charge when --

20 Q. Pausing there. The BA comms radio is one where there's
21 only one per appliance?

22 A. Yes, it's actually fitted onto that breathing apparatus
23 set.

24 Q. The personal radio is one that you all carry?

25 A. It's my own personal issue which you wear on your tunic.

1 Q. So you went onto that?

2 A. I took it with me, because if you do lose comms, at
3 least you've got another chance to -- if something
4 does -- like this did happen, you've got another chance
5 to get messages across.

6 Q. You spoke to Mr Willett personally?

7 A. I did, yes.

8 Q. What did you say to him?

9 A. I said to him: "Barry, we're going to need a three-piece
10 extension. We've got to bridge these stairs and to get
11 up to the upper floor and put the fire out up there.
12 We've put the fire out on the ground floor and now we
13 need to get up there. You can't physically do it."

14 Q. Does it follow from what you've told us that you were
15 not in a position to discover anything about what
16 happened upstairs and what the layout was upstairs,
17 simply that there was an upstairs?

18 A. No, we had no idea what the layout was. All we knew was
19 there was a staircase that had been burnt away and we
20 were unable to gain access to that upper stair -- upper
21 floor, sorry.

22 Q. Did there come a time when you checked gauges and
23 recognised that you and Mr Fournier were running low on
24 air?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. Did you then make a decision to go back to the
2 bridgehead?

3 A. No, a crew from Old Kent Road, when we were in the
4 corridor, had come up, and I knew one of them to be Nick
5 Sanchez. So they had now come in, backing us up behind,
6 but I knew because they weren't -- they hadn't run that
7 hose up the stairs, they probably had more air than us,
8 so I asked them for a gauge reading. I remember the
9 gauge -- I think it was 140-bar. I can't exactly
10 remember mine but --

11 Q. Your statement says they had 135 and 140-bar?

12 A. That's right.

13 Q. And that you and Mr Fournier and 90 and 95?

14 A. That's right, yes, so we were getting into our low
15 pressure warning whistle, which activates, as far as
16 I can remember on that BA set, between 65 and 70-bar.
17 So I turned to -- I wanted to hand over now. I knew me
18 and Charlie would have it to get out because of our air
19 situation, so I wanted to hand over to this crew, and to
20 do that, you know -- they've come in behind us, so
21 I turned round and I went: "Nick, they're bringing up
22 a three piece. You need to bridge these stairs. This
23 hose" -- we had enough hose. We'd made sure -- always
24 make sure you have enough hose, and I said, "You've got
25 to bridge these stairs and then extend that hose up to

1 the top and put that fire out up there."

2 And then, as far as I can I remember, I actually
3 went onto my whistle, which is -- again, policy stage,
4 you shouldn't really go onto your whistle, but obviously
5 we'd worked hard and, you know, I wanted to put this
6 fire out, and -- yeah, so I handed it over to Nick and
7 the other -- his buddy, in his crew, and then me and
8 Charlie made our way out, and they were happy with that.
9 We -- they were happy with my handover, that they were
10 going to continue.

11 Q. You mentioned the whistle. Is that the warning sound --

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. So after you had your own readings of 90 and 95, you
14 stayed at the scene until the whistle went?

15 A. I did, yes. Yeah, because what we were doing --
16 I wanted to have continuously have water put onto this
17 upper floor. Even though we weren't getting to the seat
18 of the fire -- you won't put the fire out but you can
19 definitely hold it back until that three-piece arrived,
20 you know, and then okay, we went onto the whistle and
21 then I said to Charlie: "We've got to go." It wasn't
22 the fact that we wanted to go. I said, "We've got to
23 go."

24 Q. Is it the reality that until the three-piece ladder
25 arrived there wasn't an enormous amount that could be

1 achieved as the fire was now at the upper floor?

2 A. That's right, and I said to them: "Just keep that jet on
3 there and hold it back. Just try to stop it spreading."
4 If you can just hold it into wherever the fire's
5 originating from until you can actually put water
6 directly onto that, the -- you know, the base of the
7 fire, you just try and hold it back. You know, you try
8 and do something. If you can't do exactly the right
9 thing then you try and do the next best thing.

10 Q. When you left the corridor on the 9th floor, were there
11 two firefighters there from Old Kent Road who remained,
12 or were there more there by the time you left?

13 A. I can't exactly remember, but I do remember the ladder
14 coming up, because I thought to myself: "Ah, excellent,
15 there's the ladder going in."

16 In fact, I may even have quickly explained -- I'm
17 not sure if that was Nick Sanchez or another crew, but
18 I said: "You're going to need one piece of that."
19 Because it's in three pieces. You're going to need one
20 piece of that, because you don't want to take all three
21 pieces in there and then have to start trying to take it
22 apart inside the fire flat. But we're now -- I was --
23 my whistle was audibly going off and, you know, I made
24 my way down to the 7th floor to the bridgehead.

25 Q. So you think before you got down to the bridgehead you'd

1 seen the ladder on its way up?

2 A. I'm pretty sure I had. I definitely -- I had, yes.

3 I remember saying: "You will need one bit of that."

4 Q. It being brought by, presumably, a pair of firefighters?

5 A. I think -- yeah. Whether they were in BA or not --

6 well, I can't -- I'd love to say I can remember exactly

7 but I can't remember exactly. But I'm pretty sure they

8 would have been because the smoke conditions now in the

9 stairwell were very smokey, so you wouldn't -- you can't

10 really survive in that without a set on, so although

11 I can't -- I'm pretty sure they would have been under

12 air as well.

13 Q. What you're saying is you felt that by that time the

14 conditions in the stairwell around, do I assume, the 9th

15 and the 7th floor were such as you wouldn't regard them

16 as tenable, survivable, unless you were in breathing

17 apparatus?

18 A. No, no. It may have been survivable for a short amount

19 of time, but you would be making -- naturally trying to

20 get out of that smoke if you weren't under air.

21 Q. Did you then go back to the entry control point on the

22 7th floor?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. Was that in the lift lobby or on the stairwell itself?

25 A. It was exactly where it had been set up. When the BA

1 entry control point at the bridgehead is set up, it
2 isn't moved, and for obvious reasons if you're coming
3 out of a job and you need to be accounted for, if it's
4 moved and you can't find it, then you're unaccounted
5 for. So -- and I knew -- I've worked with James Badger
6 a long time and I knew he wouldn't move it.

7 Q. So it was on the stairwell?

8 A. It was still where it was when we started up.

9 Q. Did you shut down your BA set at the 7th floor in the
10 stairwell, or did you wait until you got out of the
11 building?

12 A. Okay, when we got back to the 7th floor, the smoke was
13 very thick there as well, and I remember Jim and John
14 were basically kind of -- not laying on the floor but
15 they were down low.

16 Q. Because they didn't have breathing apparatus, did they?

17 A. They didn't. No, they didn't. So they were down very
18 low, and I can't -- now, they gave me my tally, which
19 I would have put straight -- straight in, and I can't --
20 I can't remember exactly if I did shut down then. I --
21 I'm pretty sure I would have shut down then and made my
22 way straight down to get out of that smoke.

23 Q. You and Mr Fournier presumably walked downstairs
24 together?

25 A. We did, yes.

1 Q. You made your way to your pump ladder, and your
2 statement says then to another block of flats?

3 A. Yeah, directly opposite, I think it's Mistral(?), and
4 outside there was -- we went out there and there was
5 some other firemen and we took our sets off, and I took
6 my tunic off and drunk a litre or so of water. Very hot
7 and -- you know, becoming -- you start feeling the
8 heat -- the heat exhaustion coming. So yeah, cool down,
9 get some water inside you, get your tunic off. You've
10 got to cool yourself down, otherwise, you know, you're
11 no good.

12 Q. How physically demanding had it been inside flat 65?

13 A. Yeah, it's as hot as any fire I've been in.

14 Q. Your statement says you looked up at the front side of
15 Lakanal. You could see floors 5, 7, 9 and 11 were
16 smoke-issuing?

17 A. Yeah.

18 Q. Smoke's coming out of the windows on those four
19 different levels?

20 A. Yeah.

21 Q. So I think we can assume you were still looking up at
22 the west side?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. Your statement says that you and Mr Fournier then took
25 over a covering jet, which means aiming a hose at the

1 building to try and prevent the fire taking further hold
2 of other flats?

3 A. Yes, there was a sector commander there who -- it's what
4 we call a covering jet. Again, similar to what we were
5 trying to do inside, try and hold them fires back,
6 because in all honesty I couldn't actually believe what
7 I was seeing. We'd put this -- the flat I went into,
8 we'd put that out, and we would have put the rest out
9 had we not run out of air, and to then come out and seen
10 the other flats alight -- I didn't know what happened.
11 All I know was that the windows were open, the wind was
12 blowing, and the other flats were catching light as --
13 as we were watching.

14 Q. You had done what you could in flat 65 and you came out
15 to find things looking worse than when you had gone in?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. This covering jet, were you aiming that at other flats
18 that were on fire, or were you aiming it at other parts
19 of the building which were not on fire as a precaution
20 to prevent them catching fire?

21 A. It -- it should only be used as a covering jet, because
22 if you're putting a jet into -- directly into a flat
23 alight and then there's a crew behind there who open the
24 door, you're forcing that fire onto them. So it's --
25 it's something that isn't particularly practised with

1 London. We fight fires internally for that reason, 'cos
2 you can't actually put -- it would be very difficult to
3 put a flat out from outside, through a window, because
4 you have the same issues we had trying to go extinguish
5 the fire on the upper floor of flat 65. To actually hit
6 the base of the fire from outside is -- you know, you're
7 asking a lot.

8 Q. Were you directing it at a flat that was on fire?

9 A. Yeah, the two flats, 5th and 7th floor, yeah, but really
10 to try -- because we didn't want them -- because all the
11 windows were open. We didn't want them catching, you
12 know, other flats, because obviously something was going
13 on where flats were catching fire that were away from
14 the initial fire flat, number 65.

15 Q. Your statement at the bottom of page 125 says you'd been
16 doing this for a couple of minutes when you heard a male
17 voice shouting from the 11th floor. He was hanging the
18 top half of his body out of the window. He looked like
19 an African man. He was black. He was shouting,
20 "Ladder, ladder, ladder." He was banging the window
21 with his hand?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. And that was on the west side as well?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. You say you called up to him and told him to go back

1 inside?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. And he did go back inside and shut the window?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Are you able to assist at all on whether you had a sense

6 that he did that because he had been able to hear you?

7 A. Yes, he had heard me and I heard him. I can't say for

8 sure, but the sector commander was with us then as we

9 were using the covering jet, and as far as I -- you

10 know, I should imagine that a message was then sent that

11 people were trapped on the upper floor. I didn't send

12 a message saying that; I just liaised with him to say,

13 "Go back in." But at that time there was no smoke

14 issuing from his flat, so as far as I was concerned

15 again, the policy is the safest place for him is there.

16 I can't tell him to go into the corridor because I don't

17 know what's in that corridor, and neither did any of us,

18 and I certainly didn't want him walking along to the

19 stairwell, because I knew what the conditions were like

20 there because I'd just come out of it.

21 Q. Was it your impression then -- I understand that it

22 was -- that it was possible at this time to communicate

23 with people as high as the 11th floor by the simple

24 means of shouting at them as loud as you could?

25 A. Yes, and as you know, I'm pretty sure a loud hailer came

1 then and some instructions were given as well. I'm
2 pretty sure there was a loud hailer.

3 Q. Just to be clear, did you shout using the loud hailer?

4 A. No.

5 Q. And he heard you anyway?

6 A. Yes, he did, yes, because I shouted to him: "There isn't
7 a ladder -- we don't have a ladder that reaches the 11th
8 floor."

9 Q. Then you moved on to firefighting with what's known as
10 a ground monitor?

11 A. Yes. Basically the throw that we had from the handheld
12 covering jet wasn't enough, so then it was decided that
13 we were gonna set up a ground monitor which would have
14 a larger throw. Again, it's something, you know --
15 okay, something needed to be done and that -- that was
16 the best course of action.

17 Q. At some point, you took over manning the pump from David
18 Sharpe?

19 A. Yes, yes. So that had been set up and then another
20 firefighter -- or an officer, he may well have been --
21 you must -- you need to understand there's a hell of
22 a lot going on now -- came round and said, "Who hasn't
23 worn a set?" I said, "I have. We were the initial
24 crew." They walked to echo 371, which was the base pump
25 at that point in supplying the dry riser, and David was

1 there -- David Sharpe was there, and he said,
2 "I haven't." So they went, "Ah, you take over the
3 pumping", and then Dave put his set on and then went to
4 the muster point.

5 Q. Was that after you had shouted up to the black man on
6 the 11th floor?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. And eventually you were relieved at the scene and you
9 got back to the fire station at about 9 pm?

10 A. Yes, I'd been given a specific task, which was to
11 control the pump of echo 371, and is -- once you're
12 detailed as a pump operator, you don't leave the pump,
13 because obviously that is the lifeline and it is the
14 machine pumping and feeding that single dry riser. So
15 that was my task, and that's what happened to me,
16 basically, and I stayed there and carried out my detail.

17 Q. Whilst you were there, did any officer of a more senior
18 level than firefighter come and talk to you about your
19 experience within the building or debrief you in any
20 way?

21 A. No, but I do recall speaking to that sector commander
22 and saying that, you know, we extinguished the flat we
23 were in, or at that time, you know, but no.

24 Q. Did he ask you any questions about what it was like in
25 the building or the layout of the building?

1 A. No.

2 Q. You were there from the outset. You were on the first
3 pair of appliances to arrive. What I'd like to ask you
4 finally is: looking back, can you assist the court with
5 whether there was any single additional thing that you
6 think would have helped you most on the day of the fire
7 to carry out the tasks that you were asked to carry out?

8 A. Yes, longer duration for my breathing apparatus set.
9 I needed more -- if I'd had a longer duration I would
10 have gone upstairs and put the other -- the upstairs
11 out, yeah.

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

13 THE CORONER: Thank you.

14 Questions from MR HENDY

15 MR HENDY: Mr Simons, my name's Hendy. I represent three of
16 the bereaved families. You had been a firefighter for
17 21 years at the time of this fire, yes?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. I get the impression, Mr Simon, that you found this fire
20 particularly distressing, no doubt because of the loss
21 of life, in particular the children?

22 A. Of course, yes.

23 Q. I'd just like to say on behalf of my clients that we
24 have no doubt whatever that you did everything you
25 personally could do on that day, and there is absolutely

1 nothing to reproach your performance on that occasion.

2 Can I ask you about radios, first of all. You told
3 the jury that you'd attended Lakanal House earlier,
4 putting out a fire in a paladin bin, and you said
5 normally you'd wait outside on the pump listening to the
6 radio. I assume that that's on the assumption that all
7 four crew are not required to put out a fire, that three
8 will do or two will do, and there's a man spare -- that
9 will be you as the driver -- to keep an ear on the radio
10 in case you're called somewhere more important?

11 A. Yes, that is the driver's detail, to stay outside.

12 Q. So as the event to which you're called grows more
13 serious, then the occasion may arise where all four of
14 you get out of the appliance and nobody can hear the
15 radio?

16 A. Yes. That would be the main scheme radio.

17 Q. That's the main radio.

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. In addition to the main radio, which is, if I'm right,
20 in contact solely with Fire Brigade control -- is that
21 right?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. With a BA crew, one of the chaps has a BA comms, which
24 you've described as an earpiece and microphone within
25 the BA set?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. And that will be whether the BA crew is two or three
3 people?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Do you ever get a BA crew of four?

6 A. Yes, a BA crew of four could be used.

7 Q. And if it was four, you would still have one with a BA
8 comms?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. You would always have one with a BA comms?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. In addition, every firefighter has a personal radio?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. Now, the BA comms radio, with whom does that
15 communicate?

16 A. That would communicate -- okay. That is set on
17 channel 6, which is a BA -- we have separate channels on
18 our radios. So there's channel 6, and that is the BA
19 channel. So that would be a radio operator who would be
20 with the BA entry control. But it's only established
21 when there's enough manpower to do so, you see, because
22 you can't have a dedicated -- when there's four of you,
23 having a radio operator at the entry control point,
24 you're overstretched there. But I know that my officer
25 in charge would have been on channel 6 to listen to me,

1 because he would want direct information from me at the
2 fire front -- on this particular day, Crew Manager
3 Willett -- and when my radio wasn't operating
4 correctly -- although it was operating, I was just
5 getting feedback from it -- I went straight onto my
6 handheld, put that onto channel 6 and then spoke to Crew
7 Manager Willett via that.

8 Q. Right. So when you set your BA comms to channel 6, that
9 will be to your commander officer on the ground?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Mr Willett?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. It's not a communication with the bridgehead?

14 A. If there was a radio operating at the bridgehead, he
15 would be on channel 6 also, but what would happen there,
16 I would get a message coming through saying, "There's
17 a radio operator on the bridgehead now", and so I could
18 liaise through him to the OIC. But at that time
19 obviously I was inside the fire. I knew -- there was
20 eight of us, so I wanted to talk directly to Barry,
21 because I didn't know what had been set up outside of
22 that, outside of the fire.

23 Q. When you're on channel 6, if you have somebody on the
24 bridgehead who's on channel 6, if you have your officer
25 downstairs on channel 6, all three of you can listen to

1 each other?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. Obviously you can't speak at the same time, but as long
4 as you're speaking at separate times you can all hear
5 each other?

6 A. Yes, it would be radio procedure, you know, "over", and
7 "message", et cetera.

8 Q. Yes. Now the personal radio that all the firefighters
9 have, what channel would that be on normally?

10 A. Normally on channel 1.

11 Q. Who is on the other end of channel 1, so to speak?

12 A. It would be all the firefighters that weren't in BA, so
13 anyone -- as you arrive at an incident, all personal
14 radios will be on channel 1, and then as -- if
15 an incident is expanded -- or, you know, expanding or
16 getting longer, then maybe certain sectors will go onto
17 channel 3 so that we don't all end up with cross
18 purposes, we can all try and keep the command and
19 control required.

20 Q. So for the part of the operation where channel 3 wasn't
21 required, all firefighters, all the officers, the
22 incident commanders and so forth could hear everything
23 that was being communicated by radio on channel 1?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. You told the jury about a woman in a burqa whom you told

1 to go back to her flat, and a young black man who came
2 up the stairs, whom you told to tell his sister to stay
3 indoors, and you told us about a man on the 11th floor
4 when you were outside, and you told him to go back
5 inside. I think you described that earlier as the
6 policy that if you're in a different flat you stay put?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. That policy is qualified only by this, I think: that you
9 stay put unless there's smoke or fire within the flat?

10 A. Absolutely, yes.

11 Q. You referred in your evidence to a compartment fire. By
12 that, as I understand it, you mean that the fire at 65
13 you believed was kept within the compartment of the
14 outer walls of flat 65?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. You said in answer to a hypothetical question from
17 Mr Maxwell-Scott that if you came across somebody coming
18 down the stairs you wouldn't send them back up. One
19 could obviously see the reason for that, but of course
20 if somebody came down the stairs who had left their
21 children on the upper floor, no doubt you could well
22 understand why they might prefer to go up, and in those
23 circumstances you wouldn't stop them, so long as you
24 believed that they were going to a separate compartment?

25 A. I think that that would -- you know, that would be

1 a judgment call. At that point, if someone came to you
2 hypothetically on a staircase and went: "My children are
3 still in the 9th", then I think you would stop what
4 you're doing and go and tell them to keep evacuating and
5 go up to the 9th and get the children. To send someone
6 who's not a firefighter back to their flat, you know,
7 the job is kind of -- you know, is yours to do.

8 Q. Well, you advised three people to stay indoors.

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. If somebody said to your advice: "Well, you've come down
11 from the 11th floor and you ought to go out", and they
12 said, "I'm not going out because I've left my children
13 upstairs", it would be perfectly understandable for you
14 to say, "Well, stay there then"?

15 A. Yeah, sorry, I don't actually understand. So --

16 Q. I'm not sure how far we can take this.

17 THE CORONER: It's all rather theoretical, isn't it? I'm
18 not sure it's going to help us in the long run, really.

19 MR HENDY: Maybe the point ought to be left, in fairness.

20 THE CORONER: Yes.

21 MR HENDY: In your statement, I notice that in relation to
22 that piece of safety glass within the flat that you
23 described as having melted and fallen onto the stairs --
24 in your statement, you say:
25 "I realised that the temperature had reached over

1 800 degrees."

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. Is that your understanding of the temperature at which

4 reinforced glass melts?

5 A. Yes. I mean, you know, some of the hottest temperatures

6 are 800 and above.

7 Q. Yes. Charlie and you took a covering jet, handheld,

8 aimed at the building to try and prevent the fire taking

9 further hold of the flats. You've described that. That

10 would have been a 45-millimetre hose, would it not?

11 A. As far as I can recall, it -- I think it was a 45 but

12 ideally you would have used a 70 so you get a better

13 throw from the jet. You know, you've got more water and

14 a more powerful jet to reach further.

15 Q. But you subsequently did get a 70-millimetre hose,

16 didn't you, because isn't that the diameter of the hose

17 that feeds the ground monitor that you set up?

18 A. Yes, 70-millimetre hose on the ground monitor.

19 Q. The ground monitor is like an artillery piece, as it

20 were? Four legs?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. Fixed in position. You point it to where it's meant to

23 go and then you keep it in that position?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. When you set that hose up, obviously that was before the

1 ALP from Greenwich arrived?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. When you spoke to the man on the 11th floor on the west
4 side of the building, you told him -- because he was
5 shouting for a ladder. You told him you had no ladder,
6 and of course, that was the case. But the ALP from
7 Greenwich ultimately would have provided a ladder,
8 although we think that the man on the 11th floor had
9 gone by then?

10 A. Yes. I'm not an aerial operator, so I wouldn't know
11 whether it would reach or not.

12 THE CORONER: You don't know high up the ladder from that
13 vehicle could go?

14 A. Generally, from the training we receive regarding
15 aerials, a realistic is the 9th floor.

16 THE CORONER: Thank you.

17 A. For a rescue.

18 MR HENDY: You said that longer duration BA would have been
19 of benefit. Presumably a longer ladder at
20 an appropriate time would also have been of benefit?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. Thank you very much, Mr Simons.

23 THE CORONER: Thank you.

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Questions from MR DOWDEN

MR DOWDEN: Good afternoon, my name's Dowden. I ask questions on behalf of Mr Francisquini. I think you told us you'd been a firefighter for 21 years?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. You have told us about two different people who you gave advice to to go back to their flats on this particular day; is that correct?

A. Yes.

Q. The pregnant lady and the man on the 11th floor?

A. Yes.

Q. At the time, you also told us that the staircase was being used by firefighters and equipment?

A. Yes.

Q. Is that correct?

A. Yes.

Q. It's a particularly narrow staircase. Would you agree with me?

A. Yes.

Q. In respect of the lady, was one of the considerations that you took on board the fact that her flat was two floors away from the fire?

A. Is this the pregnant lady, yes?

Q. That's right.

A. Yes. No, she had come out of the door onto the

1 20 we're looking at. Have you located it, Mr Simons?

2 A. 13?

3 Q. It's tab 13 and page 19 and 20.

4 A. It's a picture of a stud wall?

5 Q. That's correct. So page 19 is the picture on the

6 projector here. If you can just explain to us where you

7 had seen that the top had burnt away.

8 A. I'm sorry, this isn't a picture of the door.

9 THE CORONER: Would you just explain to Mr Simons what he's

10 looking at, because he's describing it as a stud wall,

11 which I think is not correct.

12 MS AL TAI: We're looking here, Mr Simons, at the entrance

13 to a flat.

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. This is a generic flat, it's not flat number 65, and

16 that's the front entrance. You explained in your

17 statement that the top eight to 10 inches of that door

18 had been burnt away.

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. I just wondered where you were referring to. If you

21 could explain to the jury.

22 A. Like here, like a wedge there (Indicating).

23 THE CORONER: Sorry, could you show the jury and me as well,

24 please?

25 A. Across the top like that (Indicating). That's how we

1 ascertained the fire flat.

2 MS AL TAI: I'm so sorry, Mr Simons, I can't see from this
3 position.

4 A. When we were in the corridor and -- you've got to
5 ascertain exactly what door the fire is behind. That's
6 how I ascertained it, by seeing that fire breaking out
7 from the top of that door.

8 THE CORONER: So the door itself?

9 A. I saw that before I looked through the letterbox, and
10 I think I said to Charlie: "This is the door. This is
11 the flat." You know, it's ...

12 THE CORONER: So as I understand what you're pointing to,
13 Mr Simons, you're pointing to the door itself?

14 A. Yes, the actual door itself.

15 MS AL TAI: Thank you, Mr Simons, that's helpful.

16 THE CORONER: Thank you. Yes, Mr Walsh.

17 Questions from MR WALSH

18 MR WALSH: Just three matters, Mr Simons. You mentioned
19 that when you were on the 9th floor in flat 65, your
20 whistle had been going while you were inside the flat
21 before you left. You mentioned that that's contrary to
22 policy but that you wanted to be able to stay and fight
23 the fire.

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. Strictly speaking -- or in fact, the reality is that in

1 order to protect your personal safety, you should be out
2 of the building before the whistle goes off; is that
3 right?

4 A. Yes, yes.

5 Q. But such was your commitment that you wanted to remain?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. When you left the building and you were providing, as
8 you describe it, the covering jet aimed towards the 5th
9 floor or the 7th floor, you've said that you can't
10 really attack the fire in that way. Is the primary
11 purpose, using the phrase "covering jet" as you do, to
12 essentially water those parts of the building to prevent
13 any further incidents of ignition?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. That's the main purpose of a covering jet?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. Then finally, 21 years of experience you had by the time
18 you attended this fire. You've said that you hadn't
19 seen this sort of thing happen before with fires
20 catching below the original fire floor in that way?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. How many high rise fires have you dealt with over the
23 20-odd years?

24 A. Yes, quite a few. Mainly lots and lots of high rise,
25 yeah.

1 Q. Never seen anything like this happen before?

2 A. No.

3 Q. Could you have anticipated it? Even though you may not
4 have seen it happen before, could you have anticipated
5 the possibility of it happening, using your experience?

6 A. I couldn't have anticipated it, but when we initially
7 pulled up and the amount of debris coming down --
8 normally, you know, you get some glass, and -- you know,
9 but there was physical lumps of building coming down,
10 and I actually said to Firefighter -- Charlie, I said to
11 Charlie: "You get off my side", and we walked up away
12 from the fire flat and then got underneath the covered
13 way of Lakanal, because to get off his side, he would
14 have been stepping into that falling debris. So at that
15 time there was something else going on there that
16 I hadn't witnessed before at a high rise. I've
17 witnessed glass falling, but a pane of glass, in the
18 great scheme of things, is not a massive item to fall.
19 But there just seemed to be lots of other stuff other
20 than glass falling. It's normally panes of glass that
21 crack and break and fall out once a fire develops, but
22 this time, no, it was -- and that was -- as I looked
23 through the crew cab of the pump, the pump ladder, we
24 saw the debris falling onto it. That's why I said to
25 Charlie: "You're getting off my side and we're going to

1 walk up and get underneath."

2 Q. Yes, thank you very much, Mr Simons.

3 I am so sorry, Mr Hendy reminds me that it would be
4 appropriate to ask you whether the debris which you saw
5 falling down was alight. Was it burning debris? Could
6 you see that?

7 A. No, it wasn't. As far as I can remember it wasn't
8 burning, no.

9 Q. So on the day, you saw the fires catch in the lower
10 floors, and that was a surprise to you. You've never
11 seen that happen before, but you didn't know then why
12 that had happened?

13 A. No. I didn't actually see them. It was once we'd come
14 out of the building and turned round and looked back up,
15 and then I saw the flats were alight.

16 Q. I see.

17 A. I didn't actually witness them catching fire.
18 I witnessed flats that had the smoke issuing on the 5th
19 and 7th actually igniting, and the curtains igniting,
20 but they already had smoke issuing from them.

21 Q. Yes, all right. Thank you very much indeed.

22 THE CORONER: Thank you. Members of the jury, do you have
23 any questions?
24
25

1 Questions from the Jury

2 THE FOREMAN OF THE JURY: Yes, thank you, madam coroner.

3 THE CORONER: Just speak into the microphone?

4 THE FOREMAN OF THE JURY: How's that?

5 THE CORONER: Yes, thank you.

6 THE FOREMAN OF THE JURY: Thank you.

7 We have three questions. At the time he asked the
8 black male to go back to his flat, would Officer Simons
9 know why the black male's sister was in the flat but the
10 gentlemen himself had decided to leave the flat? Was
11 he, Mr Simons, in position to know the condition of the
12 flat at the time?

13 THE CORONER: Can you help us with that?

14 A. It's Simons.

15 THE FOREMAN OF THE JURY: Sorry.

16 A. When I spoke to the male on the 11th floor, there was no
17 smoke issuing from that flat, so from that I can assume
18 that there was no fire or smoke in his flat, and the
19 sector commander that I was with -- I mean, you know,
20 it's difficult. There's a lot of people doing a lot of
21 things, and so you're a very small part of the overall
22 thing, but I knew that I wasn't the only one that
23 witnessed it. If I was on my own there, I would have
24 gone straight to the OIC and said, "There's someone
25 trapped on the 11th", but I would be very surprised if

1 that information wasn't relaid to the bridgehead or the
2 BA entry control --

3 THE CORONER: But that's not something that you personally
4 know?

5 A. I didn't personally do it that day. If I was on my own
6 that day and I saw him, then yes, but I offered advice
7 and then the sector commander I was with -- so now this
8 fire is, you know, becoming now, sectorised and then --

9 THE CORONER: Sorry to interrupt, but that's evidence which
10 someone else will be able to cover, thank you.

11 A. Yes.

12 THE CORONER: Yes.

13 THE FOREMAN OF THE JURY: Thank you. Our second question
14 may actually partially be covered by your answer at the
15 end there, but just to clarify: using the communications
16 facility within your BA equipment, not your personal
17 radio -- well, your personal radio, I guess, in this
18 case -- did you relay the information about the
19 asthmatic lady and her children in the flat next to the
20 fire immediately to some central communications
21 authority or did you communicate this face-to-face after
22 your first turn on the breathing apparatus, so when you
23 returned to entry control?

24 THE CORONER: Would you help us with that please, Mr Simons?

25 A. It's something that is -- I can't 100 per cent say, but

1 when I spoke to -- I think it was her brother -- it was
2 her brother -- I sent him back down to the bridgehead
3 where John Dennis and Jim Badger were, and it's
4 difficult to remember, but I wouldn't have ignored that
5 fact, and he would have gone back down to them and
6 explained to them. Because my priority then was to put
7 this fire out, because if she was in the flat, although
8 I've -- I'm now aware of other facts, that she wasn't
9 actually next to that fire flat, to draw -- even if we
10 had gone to her flat, at that point with that door burnt
11 off, to bring her out into that corridor without the
12 correct -- correct protective clothing and equipment
13 would have been detrimental -- would have been very
14 detrimental.

15 THE CORONER: Thank you.

16 THE FOREMAN OF THE JURY: Okay, just one more: you said that
17 you could smell smoke when leaving the station because
18 the station was so close. You also said that although
19 the smoke was not thick initially, it smelt very strong.
20 Do you recall-- I realise it's some time ago -- whether
21 it was more of a plastic smell or a chemical smell?

22 A. There's a very specific smell to a domestic fire. It's
23 very pungent and the smoke is particularly nasty. So
24 no, it was the smell of a domestic fire at that time.

25 THE FOREMAN OF THE JURY: So that's pretty obvious to

1 a firefighter?

2 A. Yeah, I don't think you would have a -- you've got
3 everything alight in there from mattresses to plastics
4 to cooking to food -- everything. It's a very
5 distinctive smell. Unless you smell it, you know, it's
6 very difficult to describe it. There's no one specific
7 smell, unless you had, you know, some plastic burning on
8 its own, and then it would smell of plastic. But once
9 it's all mixed in with carpet and wallpaper and the
10 whole thing -- so no, it was just that smell that
11 I recognised.

12 THE FOREMAN OF THE JURY: Thank you, Mr Simons.

13 THE CORONER: Yes, Mr Simons, thank you very much for coming
14 and for giving the evidence that you have. You're free
15 to go but you're welcome to stay if you would prefer.

16 A. Thank you.

17 (The witness withdrew)

18 THE CORONER: Yes, Mr Maxwell-Scott.

19 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Madam, the next witness is Louise Daisey.

20 THE CORONER: Thank you. I'm not sure if Miss Daisey is in
21 court -- oh yes, come forward, Miss Daisey.

22 LOUISE DAISEY (affirmed)

23 THE CORONER: Miss Daisey, do sit down, thank you very much.
24 You have a piece of paper. Just give that to Mr Clark,
25 because you're not going to need that. Do help yourself

1 to a glass of water.

2 A. Thank you.

3 THE CORONER: You'll see that the microphone in front of you
4 is glowing red, which means that it's switched on, but
5 you do need to be quite close to the microphone for your
6 voice to be amplified. So it will seem a little
7 artificial but although the questions will be coming
8 from the hall, if you could direct your answers to the
9 jury, that would be helpful. Mr Maxwell-Scott, who's
10 standing, is going to begin by asking questions on my
11 behalf and then there will be other questions after
12 that.

13 A. Okay.

14 Questions from MR MAXWELL-SCOTT

15 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Can you give the court your full name,
16 please.

17 A. It's Miss Louise Margaret Elizabeth Daisey.

18 Q. I'm going to be asking you some questions, firstly about
19 your knowledge of Lakanal House, and then secondly about
20 your experience of the fire that occurred there on
21 3 July 2009.

22 Looking at the first of those topics first, we're
23 hearing evidence from at least ten residents of Lakanal
24 House and what we're trying to do is ask them each
25 essentially the same questions about their knowledge of

1 fire safety advice and the layout of the building so
2 that we can build up a picture of what residents did and
3 didn't know at the time. I'm going to start by asking
4 you those types of questions, firstly about fire safety
5 advice. If we could turn in the advocates' bundle to
6 page 1050, which is in file 3. (Handed) If you have
7 that in front of you.

8 This is a four-page leaflet starting on page 1050
9 and going through to page 1053. What I'd like you to
10 do, taking as much time as you need, is to look at those
11 four pages and then give the court your best answer as
12 to whether you recognise them and whether you think you
13 have or have not seen that document before. (Pause)

14 A. I've seen one similar.

15 Q. You've seen one similar?

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. Thank you. Then if you look on to page 1054 and the
18 page that immediately follows it, so making a two-page
19 document, it's the same question again. Take as much
20 time as you need and tell the court as best you can
21 whether you think you've seen that document before.

22 (Pause)

23 A. I can't say I've particularly seen this one, but there
24 is a few -- a few bits within it that is within your
25 tenancy booklet that you get with the council.

1 Q. Let me help you with that. If you look in the bottom
2 right-hand corner where the number 27 is. This is
3 page 27 of a longer document, and if you look at that
4 page and the two pages that immediately follow it, this
5 one here and this one here.

6 A. Yeah, I've seen them ones.

7 Q. You've seen that before?

8 A. Yeah.

9 Q. Is that the handbook that comes with the tenancy
10 document that you were referring to?

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. Did you have that handbook in your flat?

13 A. Yes, I did.

14 Q. Whilst you were living in Lakanal House, did you ever
15 receive what's known as a home fire safety visit? I'll
16 explain what it is. I think you'd probably remember if
17 you ever did, because it involves one or more
18 firefighters coming to your flat and giving you some
19 advice.

20 A. No, not at the time I was there.

21 Q. I'm going to move on and ask you some questions about
22 your knowledge of the layout of Lakanal House. Did you
23 know how many floors there were in the building?

24 A. There's 13 floors.

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

1 A. Not accurately, no, but I'd say there was about 90.

2 Q. Did you know that all the flats in the building have
3 essentially an identical layout?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. In your flat, you knew, I assume, that there were
6 balconies on either side?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. On the upper level?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. If I show you a photograph of a balcony. That's
11 an example of a balcony at Lakanal House. Did you know
12 where the door that we see at the end of that balcony
13 led?

14 A. Yes, it leads into the stairway.

15 Q. That's a close-up of the door.

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. Had you ever been through that door?

18 A. Yes, because I have a young son and I always used to
19 tell him that if there was a fire we'd go through that
20 if there was no other way out.

21 Q. Did you know that from that door you would go into
22 a lobby area and then, in due course, you would go
23 through another set of doors and get to the central
24 staircase?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. And that from there you could walk safely out of the
2 building?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. To what extent did you have a feel for where other flats
5 in the building were, in the sense that if you met
6 somebody outside who said, "I'm trying to get to my
7 friend in flat 42", for example, would you have been
8 able to give them some guidance on how to get there?

9 A. What, with the fire being there or on a normal day?

10 Q. Just on a normal day?

11 A. I'd probably direct them to the lift lobby area where it
12 tells the numbers of the floors and what the number
13 flats are.

14 Q. So that's the lift lobby area?

15 A. Yeah, and above that it tells you about all the floors
16 and what numbers are on which floor.

17 Q. So even if you didn't know where flat 42 was, you would
18 have said the starting point is: "Go and have a look at
19 that sign and that will help you."

20 A. Yeah.

21 Q. I'm now going to ask you about your experiences on the
22 day of the fire itself?

23 A. Okay.

24 Q. At the time you were living in flat 64, is that right,
25 on the 9th floor?

1 A. Yeah.

2 Q. I'll just get up an image for you that gives us all
3 an indication of where that is. That's an image that
4 superimposes on the west side of the building the flat
5 numbers. We can see that you are on the 9th and 10th
6 floors?

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. You had a front door on the east side of the building,
9 and you were on the opposite side of the central
10 staircase to where the fire, as we now know, started?

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. You lived there with your partner, David, and your 10
13 year-old son?

14 A. Yeah, that's correct.

15 Q. On the afternoon of 3 July, did there come a time when
16 your partner called to you -- and you were all within
17 the flat -- and said, "Can you smell burning?"

18 A. Yeah. At the time I couldn't smell burning, but then
19 after a while -- because I'd had a shower, I've come out
20 of the shower and then I got dressed, and after a while
21 I could smell a little bit of burning. So my initial
22 thought would be: "Oh, someone's set the bins on fire."
23 So I've looked out of my window thinking, "Oh, they've
24 set the bins on fire." There wasn't a fire in the bin,
25 but as I looked to my left there was smoke coming out of

1 the next door window.

2 Q. You went over to a window?

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. Can you help us with which room you were in when you

5 looked out?

6 A. I was in my bedroom, which was --

7 Q. On the east side of the building?

8 A. Yeah. No, it was on the front -- it's really hard to

9 tell which is which. There was a front building, which

10 is where the kitchen -- living room was, so it would

11 have been on the back. So yeah, it would have been on

12 the east, sorry.

13 Q. So you looked out of that window to your left?

14 A. Left, yeah.

15 Q. Which is in the direction of flat 65?

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. What did you see?

18 A. I saw just a line of black smoke coming out, which --

19 then I told my partner David that there was a fire and

20 we'd have to get out.

21 Q. Why was it your immediate reaction that "We've got to

22 get out" as far as you can remember?

23 A. Well, my initial thought is: you see smoke, it leads to

24 obviously something burning, and then naturally you

25 think of fire. But by the time I opened my front door

1 there was a haze of black smoke. So I grabbed the
2 mobile, which was my partner's, and I rung the
3 Fire Brigade, and asked to be put through to the
4 Fire Brigade, and I also ran up and down my corridor
5 knocking on my neighbours' doors.

6 Q. Just pause there, because I'm just going to ask you
7 about that. You may not know this, but all 999 calls
8 are meant to be logged and they're tape-recorded. We
9 know that your call on your partner's mobile was at
10 16.22.28.

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. We also have a typed-up copy of what was said in that
13 call?

14 A. Okay.

15 Q. If I just show you that now. It's at page 744 in the
16 advocates' bundles, which is file 2. (Handed) You
17 won't, obviously, have seen this before.

18 A. No.

19 Q. The calls are all typed up in the order that they were
20 made to the London Fire Brigade, and you happened to be
21 call 11. You were the 11th person to call 999 in
22 respect of this fire. Do you see at the very bottom of
23 that page, the caller, which is you, says, "I'm at 64"?

24 A. Yeah.

25 Q. And then, over the page, the next thing that you say,

1 you say:

2 "We're knocking on the neighbour's door now."

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. Just for completeness, on the bottom of the next page,

5 which is 746, the operator asked:

6 "How many floors to the whole block, do you know?"

7 And you said:

8 "It's on the 9th floor and there's 14 floors."

9 A. Yeah.

10 Q. The reason why this call is helpful to us is because we

11 know the exact time it was made.

12 A. Okay.

13 Q. We also know, as you say in your witness statement and

14 as is confirmed in this typed-up account of the call,

15 that you were in the corridor part of the time you were

16 making the call?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. So it helps us to identify what, as far as you felt, the

19 conditions were like in the corridor at that exact

20 moment in time you were making the call. So going back

21 to your statement -- do you have a copy of your

22 statement?

23 A. No.

24 Q. I think it would be helpful for you to have one. This

25 was made on 7 July 2009. Was your memory better then

1 than it is today, as to precisely what happened during
2 the course of events?

3 A. I don't know -- no, probably better then.

4 Q. Better then?

5 A. It was more fresh then, yes.

6 Q. That's what I would expect. So if you could be shown
7 that. It starts at page 127. (Handed) We're going to
8 look with you at page 128. In the middle of the page,
9 you talk about using a phone to call 999, asking to be
10 put through to the Fire Brigade?

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. And you say:

13 "As I was doing this, I came out of my flat and went
14 along the hall, banging on everyone's doors. As I was
15 doing this, I was shouting, 'There's a fire, get out.'"

16 And then you were talking about what it was like in
17 the hallway?

18 A. Yeah.

19 Q. By the hallway do you mean the corridor?

20 A. The corridor, yeah.

21 Q. You said:

22 "There was smoke in the hallway. It was not heavy;
23 it was a bit like a haze. It was getting in my throat
24 and making me cough, so I ran back to my flat. As I got
25 back to my door, Craig [your son] had already gone into

1 the lift lobby and down the stairwell. I ran in and
2 grabbed a towel and wet it so that I could cover my face
3 and to help me breathe. I came back out. Dave [your
4 partner] was there. All the other neighbours were
5 making their way to the stairs."

6 Does that help you to remember what it was like?

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. How smokey was it in the corridor outside your flat?

9 A. Like I say, it was hazy, like a fire had just started,
10 but then as -- as we were getting out and we went down
11 and we looked through to the other corridor, it was
12 quite thick and black.

13 Q. In your corridor, I think I'm right in saying that your
14 flat was the one closest to the central staircase?

15 A. Yes, yes.

16 Q. Could you see to the end of the corridor? Could you see
17 the ventilation grill at the end?

18 A. What, on my side?

19 Q. On your side.

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. And then you went into the lift lobby area?

22 A. Yeah.

23 Q. I'll show you a photograph now. Then you would have
24 seen ahead of you a set of doors like this leading on
25 the opposite corridor?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. The one where the flat was when the fire started,
3 flat 65?

4 A. Yeah.

5 Q. Did you look down that corridor?

6 A. Yes, because the neighbour -- the girl -- the little
7 girl Rhoda, her mum and her lived down that corridor,
8 and they were holding the door open to come out, and as
9 the door was open you could see all the black smoke, but
10 you couldn't see to the other end of that corridor.

11 Q. So that corridor outside of flat 65 had black smoke in
12 it, and you couldn't see the ventilation grill at the
13 end?

14 A. No.

15 Q. I think your partner helped to carry this little girl
16 Rhoda who lived on that corridor --

17 A. Yeah.

18 Q. -- out of the building?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. And you all went down the stairs together?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. Were other residents also making their way down the
23 stairs?

24 A. Yes. There was also a couple on the 5th floor that
25 tried getting the lift, but I told them not to use the

1 lift and come down the stairs.

2 Q. Was there smoke in the stairwell on your level, the 9th
3 floor level, when you first went into it?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Did that change as you went down the staircase?

6 A. Yes, as we got lower, say past the 7th floor to the 5th
7 floor, it wasn't smokey, and obviously the people on the
8 5th floor that were trying to get in the lift was
9 unaware that there was a fire in the building.

10 Q. Just to try and fit a timeframe to this. When you made
11 your 999 call, you were on your mobile in part in the
12 corridor?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. There was a point when you went back into your own flat,
15 wasn't there?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. How long were you in your own flat for?

18 A. Just probably 20/30 seconds.

19 Q. Just to grab a towel?

20 A. I literally grabbed a towel, went in the bathroom,
21 because the bathroom's directly by the front door.

22 Q. Then when you came out at the bottom of the stairs, you
23 had come out on the east side of the building where
24 there's a grassy area?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. And you saw a fire engine arrive?

2 A. Yeah, they were arriving as we come out of the doors.

3 Q. One fire engine or more?

4 A. I can only recall one at the time, but from that angle
5 you couldn't see further down the road, so ...

6 Q. Would I be right in thinking you couldn't see what was
7 happening on the other side of the building?

8 A. No, I could see what was happening, but where you saw
9 the Fire Brigade come, so you knew that something was
10 going to be dealt with, and I was more concentrating on
11 getting the children to the grass area.

12 Q. I can well understand that. All I wanted to try and
13 work out was whether you thought that what you saw
14 arriving was the first fire engine to arrive?

15 A. Yes, I do believe it was the first fire engine.

16 Q. Would it be possible that there was one or more already
17 parked on the west side that you couldn't see?

18 A. Possibly, but I couldn't tell if there was or wasn't.

19 Q. In any event, as you got to the bottom of the stairs and
20 went out of the building, you saw a fire engine arrive?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. You then stayed around that area for half an hour or so?

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. On the grassy area by the east side of the building?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. Did any member of the emergency services come and talk
2 to you or anyone near you at that time?

3 A. No, they were going straight up to deal with the fire.

4 Q. Did there come a time when you were asked to move back?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. Who moved you?

7 A. There was a fireman that come and said to us we needed
8 to move back.

9 Q. Because they were making a cordon and they wanted to
10 widen it?

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. Did you then go round to the west side of the building?

13 A. Yes, we did, yes.

14 Q. And that was the first view you had of it?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. You could see that there was more fire damage on that
17 side?

18 A. Yes, it was worse on the west than it was on the east.

19 Q. Thank you very much. Those are my questions, there may
20 be some others.

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

23 MS AL TAI: No thank you, madam.

24 THE CORONER: Mr Walsh?

25 MR WALSH: No thank you, madam.

1 THE CORONER: Members of the jury, do you have any questions
2 for Miss Daisey? Thank you.

3 Miss Daisey, thank you very much indeed for coming
4 today, it's been very helpful, and thank you very much
5 for the help that you've given to us. You're welcome
6 stay if you would like but you're free to go if you
7 prefer.

8 A. Thank you.

9 (The witness withdrew)

10 THE CORONER: That sounds a sensible point at which to have
11 a break. Is there anything we need to cover before we
12 have finish?

13 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: I don't think so, it may be helpful if
14 Mr Clark could help us as to who we'll have this
15 afternoon.

16 MR CLARK: We'll have two this afternoon.

17 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Is that Mr Ebiowei and Miss Thomas?

18 MR CLARK: Let me just check my list. Mr Ebiowei and also
19 Miss Georgia Thomas.

20 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Thank you.

21 THE CORONER: Thank you very much. All right, 2 o'clock
22 then. Thank you very much.

23 (1.00 pm)

24 (The short adjournment)

25 (2.00 pm)

1 THE CORONER: Before we ask the jury to come back in,
2 I thought it might be helpful if we just had a quick
3 discussion about the jury's questions. Mr Matthews has
4 made a suggestion as to how one might respond to some of
5 the questions. I don't know whether everyone has had
6 an opportunity to consider that, and if so, any
7 contributions?

8 MR HENDY: Madam, I would like to say that we are happy with
9 all the answers but we are not. I wonder if we could
10 just take a little more time and come back to you on
11 that.

12 THE CORONER: Okay. Can you just give me an idea as to when
13 you think that might be?

14 MR HENDY: Today, and I would like to speak to my learned
15 friend Ms Al Tai about it as well.

16 THE CORONER: All right, okay. I think then that we'll have
17 to postpone the decision on that. All right.

18 Well, I understand that we're just trying to round
19 up the witnesses who are due to come this afternoon, so
20 I suggest we have a short break while we just work out
21 where we're going on that.

22 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Yes, that's right, madam. I understand
23 neither of them is in the building at the moment. At
24 some point in the course of the afternoon I'm also
25 proposing to read, under rule 37, the witness statements

1 of Claudette Williams, who lived at flat 96, and Robert
2 Bailey, who lived at flat 22. They are in the bundle of
3 statements to be read under rule 37 at pages 7 and 10.

4 THE CORONER: All right, thank you very much. Mr Clark's
5 just coming in.

6 MR CLARK: Madam, they're both on their way but neither are
7 here yet.

8 THE CORONER: All right. In that case, I suggest we have
9 a short break and then we ask the jurors to come in.

10 MR COMPTON: Madam, may I just raise one short matter. One
11 of the witnesses we're going to hear evidence from this
12 afternoon, I understand, is Norman Ebiowei.

13 THE CORONER: Yes.

14 MR COMPTON: Can I just take you -- it's the last page of
15 the first statement, page 64. It's the first paragraph
16 of that statement.

17 THE CORONER: Yes.

18 MR COMPTON: May I just ask you to read those four lines to
19 yourself.

20 THE CORONER: Sorry, which paragraph?

21 MR COMPTON: It's the first paragraph.

22 THE CORONER: The first paragraph. I'll just read that.

23 (Pause) I haven't discussed this with Mr Maxwell-Scott
24 but I had rather assumed that he would not be asking
25 questions on that paragraph at all.

1 MR COMPTON: That's indeed correct, but I understand that my
2 learned friend Mr Hendy may be asking questions.
3 I haven't spoken to anyone else. I think if anyone is
4 going to ask questions about this, I would simply remind
5 those advocates who are asking questions that if it's
6 just dealt with in a very generalised manner that can be
7 unfair to parties, and if one goes into the detail, to
8 remember that we're going to hear evidence in some
9 detail about the composite panels, about the doors and
10 all these other aspects, and somebody who is a resident
11 can make remarks like that that may be worth a lot more
12 heat than light.

13 THE CORONER: Yes.

14 MR COMPTON: I would just ask anyone who is going to make
15 questions to recall that. I'm not throwing that down at
16 as a gauntlet in any sense but --

17 THE CORONER: No, no, it's a fair point to raise. Was
18 anybody hoping to raise that?

19 MR HENDY: Madam, when my learned friend was asking me about
20 this, I thought he was inviting me to ask questions
21 about it, but now I see the boot is on the other foot.
22 I can't see that investigating this is going to shed
23 much light on the incidents that the jury are concerned
24 with, so I won't ask any questions.

25 THE CORONER: Anyone else?

1 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: I was just going to indicate for
2 everybody that I was proposing to stop eliciting
3 evidence from Mr Ebiowei around the point towards the
4 top of page 3, in the paragraph where he says, "We
5 stayed here for hours."

6 THE CORONER: Yes, okay, that's helpful. All right. Does
7 anybody else want to add to this discussion? Well,
8 I think it's been useful to cover that. Certainly
9 I don't think that it's going to help take matters
10 forward if we ask this witness about the general points
11 that are being raised.

12 MR COMPTON: Thank you, madam.

13 THE CORONER: All right. Well, we'll have a very short
14 break then and hope to begin again very shortly. Thank
15 you.

16 (2.06 pm)

17 (A short break)

18 (2.10 pm)

19 THE CORONER: Yes, thank you, do sit down. Miss Thomas has
20 arrived. Can we have the jurors in, please.

21 (In the presence of the Jury)

22 THE CORONER: I think Miss Thomas is here, so could she come
23 in, please.

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GEORGIA THOMAS (sworn)

THE CORONER: Thank you very much, Miss Thomas. Do sit down. Do pour yourself a glass of water. There's a microphone in front of you, and it's picking up and amplifying your voice, but you need to be quite close to it for it to do that, so if you could sit quite close to it that would be helpful.

Mr Maxwell-Scott, who is standing, is going to begin by asking you some questions on my behalf and then there will be some questions from others in the room. When you're giving your answers, if you could remember that instead of looking into the room, if you look across to the members of the jury who are sitting opposite you, they'll be able to hear your answers and you'll also be closer to the microphone. Thank you.

Questions from MR MAXWELL-SCOTT

MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Good afternoon. Can you give the court your full name, please.

A. Georgia Nicola Thomas.

Q. I'm going to be asking you some questions firstly about your knowledge of the layout of the building of Lakanal House and then secondly about your experience during the fire on 3 July 2009.

Turning to that first topic, you are one of at least ten residents of Lakanal House who are going to be

1 giving evidence to the coroner, and we are asking each
2 of them essentially the same set of questions about
3 their knowledge of fire safety advice and their
4 knowledge of the layout of the building, because that
5 enables us to build up a picture of what residents knew
6 and what their understanding was. If I could start by
7 asking you about fire safety advice and ask you to have
8 a look in the advocates' bundles, file 3, at page 1050.
9 (Handed) Just take a moment.

10 This is a leaflet prepared by the London
11 Fire Brigade, and it's four pages long. So if you look
12 at that first page and then, in your own time, look at
13 each of the next three pages. The question is going to
14 be simply this: having had a chance to look at it, and
15 taking as much time as you need, do you recognise it?
16 Do you think it's a document you've seen before or not?

17 (Pause)

18 A. No, I don't recognise it.

19 Q. You don't recognise it?

20 A. No.

21 Q. Thank you. If you look at the next document that starts
22 at 1054. This one is a two-page document, so if you
23 look at that page and the next page and then, in your
24 own time, answer the same question, which is simply
25 whether you think you recognise the document or not.

1 A. No.

2 Q. Have you, for any reason whatsoever, ever looked at the
3 London Fire Brigade website for advice about fire safety
4 matters?

5 A. No, I didn't.

6 Q. Have you ever, whilst living at Lakanal House, received
7 what's called a home fire safety visit, which is where
8 a firefighter comes to your flat and gives you some
9 advice?

10 A. I remember getting, I think, a fire blanket once to put
11 in the kitchen, but to be honest I can't remember ...

12 Q. Just take a moment, because I think that you may have
13 had such a visit but a long time ago.

14 A. Yeah.

15 Q. Back in 2005. If I just show you a document. This is
16 in file 4, page 1103. If you could find page 1103 in
17 that bundle. Is that a page that on the top of it says
18 "Summary of home fire safety visits"?

19 A. Yeah.

20 Q. If you turn over the page -- this is very difficult to
21 read but about ten lines from the top, do you see your
22 name, "Mrs G Thomas"?

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. And a date in April 2005?

25 A. Okay.

1 THE CORONER: Miss Thomas, we can't hear you very well.
2 Would you keep your voice up, please.
3 A. Sorry, yes.
4 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: So according to that list, you received
5 a visit from one or more firefighters in April 2005. Do
6 you remember that at all?
7 A. I think -- yeah, because I remember getting the -- the
8 fire blanket thing to put in the kitchen, so ...
9 Q. Do you remember one or more firefighters being in your
10 flat? If you don't remember, just say so.
11 A. Yeah, sorry.
12 THE CORONER: Sorry, Miss Thomas, we are having difficulty
13 hearing you, so please, if you could keep up to the
14 microphone, thank you.
15 A. Sorry.
16 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: It's not something that you really
17 remember?
18 A. No.
19 Q. Thank you. If you can look then in the same bundle at
20 page 1068. If you look in the bottom right-hand corner,
21 you can see a number 27.
22 A. Yeah.
23 Q. So this is page 27 of a longer document, and if you look
24 at that page and the next two pages, just taking, again,
25 as long as you need, can you see whether you think you

1 recognise those pages or whether you think you've seen
2 them before?

3 A. Honestly, I can't remember.

4 Q. Okay, that's fine. You can put that bundle away. I'm
5 going to ask you now about your knowledge on some
6 features of the building of Lakanal House. I think
7 you'd been living there since December 2003, so you'd
8 lived there for about five and a half years until the
9 fire.

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. You lived on the top floor; is that right?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. And you lived in flat 98?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Did you know how many floors there were in total in the
16 building? I assume you did, because you lived at the
17 top.

18 A. We just call it 13 floors.

19 Q. Okay. Did you know that flat 98 was the highest number
20 flat in the building?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. Did you know that all the flats in the building were
23 essentially identical in layout?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. If you think about your flat, you had a front door and

1 bedrooms on the east side of the building?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. But upstairs you had a kitchen on the east side but
4 a lounge on the west side; is that right?

5 A. Yes, yes.

6 Q. Do you remember that there were balconies that you could
7 get to on either side of the building on the upper
8 floor?

9 A. Yes, there were balconies there, yes.

10 Q. Let me just refresh your memory with a picture of those.
11 Do you recognise that as being what the balconies looked
12 like?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. You see the door at the end of the balcony. Do you know
15 where those doors went?

16 A. No.

17 Q. Did you know what the purpose of the balconies and the
18 those exits from the balconies was?

19 A. I heard they were for fire but I've never used it, I've
20 never gone through it. I don't know.

21 Q. So you'd never been through them and you weren't sure
22 what they were for. You said you'd heard they were for
23 fire. Did you hear that before the fire in July 2009 or
24 afterwards?

25 A. Before, before.

1 Q. Thank you.

2 THE CORONER: Miss Thomas, I'm sorry to keep saying this,
3 but we are having difficulty hearing you. If you want
4 to just pull the microphone towards you a little or just
5 pull your chair in. That's good.

6 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: I'm now going to ask you about your
7 experience of the fire itself in July 2009. Is it right
8 that you were in flat 98 that afternoon with your two
9 children?

10 A. Yes, I was.

11 Q. And there came a time when something caught your eye
12 outside the kitchen window?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. So that was on the east side of the building?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. You went out onto the balcony on the kitchen side?

17 A. Yes, I did.

18 Q. Do you remember what you saw?

19 A. I saw thick black smoke coming up from below.

20 Q. What did you think when you saw it?

21 A. I wasn't staying in there. I didn't know what it was
22 but I just wasn't staying in there.

23 Q. So your immediate instinctive reaction was: "I'm not
24 staying in there"?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. Did you see any of your neighbours out on the balcony?
2 A. Yes, my next door neighbour came out just as I was out
3 there as well.
4 Q. Do you remember his name?
5 A. William, I think.
6 Q. Might it be Norman? You gave a statement in July 2009
7 on the 20th. Do you think you remembered things better
8 when you gave that statement than you do today? Would
9 it help you to see that statement?
10 A. Yes, please.
11 Q. That starts at page 65 in the statements bundle.
12 (Handed) Just take a moment. Do you recognise that
13 statement?
14 A. Yes.
15 Q. So about two thirds of the way down that first page,
16 just below the second holepunch, there's a reference to
17 you thinking: "I'm not staying here." You wanted to
18 leave:
19 "Outside on the balcony I saw my neighbour, Norman."
20 Do you see that?
21 A. Yes.
22 Q. Does that help you to remember?
23 A. Yes.
24 Q. Did you then hear sirens outside?
25 A. I remember hearing a smoke alarm, like a smoke alarm

1 making noise.

2 Q. A smoke alarm from somewhere in the building?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. You had your two children with you in flat 98?

5 A. Yes, I did.

6 Q. What did you do and what did they do?

7 A. They were watching the TV and I shouted at them.

8 Q. In order to get them to do what?

9 A. So we could get out.

10 Q. Did you then get yourself and the two children out into

11 the corridor outside the front door?

12 A. Yes, I did.

13 Q. Can you remember whether it was smokey at all in that

14 corridor on the 13th floor when you went out into it?

15 A. Yes, there was.

16 Q. Sorry? I didn't quite hear that.

17 A. Yes, there was smoke.

18 Q. It was smokey. You know that the corridor runs from

19 your flat at one end towards the central staircase area

20 at the other end. Could you see the length of the

21 corridor when you went out into it?

22 A. Not clearly.

23 Q. Was Norman out in the corridor as well with members of

24 his family?

25 A. Yes, they were, yes.

1 Q. Did you and your two children and Norman and his family
2 then make your way together into the central staircase?
3 A. Yes, we did.
4 Q. What was the smoke like when you got into the staircase?
5 Was it worse or better or the same?
6 A. It was just thick black smoke.
7 Q. If you look at the next page of your statement, page 66
8 at the bottom, by the first holepunch, about a quarter
9 of the way down, your statement says:
10 "As we got to the stairwell, the smoke was really
11 strong."
12 Is that right?
13 A. Yes.
14 Q. And your children were crying?
15 A. Yes, they were.
16 Q. You don't remember it being hot but the smoke was black?
17 A. Yes.
18 Q. And you didn't feel you had more than half normal
19 vision?
20 A. Yes.
21 Q. I imagine it was a very scary experience?
22 A. Yes, it was.
23 Q. Whilst you were trying to get down out of the staircase,
24 did you have any difficulties with breathing as a result
25 of the smoke?

1 A. It was -- it was hard -- hard to breathe.

2 Q. Was it painful to breathe?

3 A. It was, 'cos I could feel my chest burning.

4 Q. What kept you going?

5 A. I had to get my children out of there.

6 Q. Do you remember any points at which the smoke got worse

7 and then got better?

8 A. No.

9 Q. If you look on the same page of your statement, about

10 halfway down, the end of that paragraph says:

11 "The smoke was at its thickest between the 9th and

12 11th floor and this is when it got really hard. I think

13 the only thing that kept us going was the adrenalin."

14 Is that what it felt like?

15 A. Yes, yes.

16 Q. Did Norman help you with your children to get out?

17 A. Yes, he did.

18 Q. About three quarters of the way down that page it says:

19 "Between about the 5th and 9th floor I passed two

20 firemen."

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. Was that the first time you'd seen firemen?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. The statement says:

25 "I continued down and the smoke began to get

1 clearer. I remember seeing other people in the
2 stairwell."

3 Are you able to remember if they were people who
4 were residents who were also going down the stairs?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. In your statement you say:

7 "There was just panic everywhere."

8 Was that residents who were panicking, as it seemed
9 to you?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Then you got out of the staircase at the ground floor
12 and you say, at the very bottom of that page:

13 "At first there was no tape or anyone to keep us
14 back."

15 A. No, there wasn't.

16 Q. Then a bit later you walked round to the other side of
17 the block and you saw that the fire was worse on the
18 other side?

19 A. Yes, I did.

20 Q. Is it right that one of your children was complaining of
21 a headache and had a temperature and you felt burning in
22 your chest?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. And that you sought advice from the police and then from
25 the emergency services and were seen by a paramedic?

1 A. Yes, I was.

2 Q. But you didn't need to go to hospital and nor did your
3 children?

4 A. No.

5 Q. Just finally, there's also reference in your statement
6 to about two years before the statement, so back in
7 2007, there having been a fire in a flat on the 11th
8 floor. Do you remember that at all?

9 A. I remember a fire in the -- the rubbish chute at the
10 bottom.

11 Q. Thank you very much. Those are my questions, but others
12 may have some questions.

13 THE CORONER: Thank you.

14 Questions from MR HENDY

15 MR HENDY: Mrs Thomas, my name's Hendy. I represent three
16 of the bereaved families. Just one matter I wanted to
17 ask you about: you said at the beginning that you heard
18 a smoke alarm, I think you said?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. Was that a smoke alarm in your flat, or was it somewhere
21 else?

22 A. It could have been 'cos all the doors were open as well,
23 so it could have been my alarm.

24 Q. It could have been your alarm?

25 A. Yes, or Norman's alarm.

1 Q. You say in your statement at page 68 -- we need not turn
2 it up -- that there are no communal fire alarms; is that
3 right?

4 A. I never remembered seeing any, no.

5 Q. So am I right in thinking that the only fire alarms or
6 smoke alarms are those that are fitted by tenants in
7 their own flats?

8 A. Could have been, yes.

9 Q. Just as a matter of interest, where in your flat was
10 your smoke alarm?

11 A. Above the stairs going up towards the kitchen.

12 Q. Above the stairs?

13 A. Yeah. Up the stairs and the ceiling above the stairs.

14 Q. Do all the flats have fire alarms or is it a matter for
15 each tenant to decide whether they want one or not?

16 A. I don't know.

17 Q. You don't know. Thank you very much.

18 THE CORONER: Miss Thomas, thank you very much for coming.
19 Thank you very much for the evidence you've given. I'm
20 sorry it is distressing, but I'm grateful to you for
21 coming and giving your help. You're welcome to stay if
22 you would like, but you're free to go if you'd prefer.
23 Thank you very much.

24 A. Thank you.

25 (The witness withdrew)

1 THE CORONER: Yes, Mr Clark, can we see whether the next
2 witness is ready to come in, please.

3 NORMAN EBIOWEI (sworn)

4 THE CORONER: Thank you very much. It's Mr Ebiowei, is it?
5 A. Yes.

6 THE CORONER: Do sit down, and do help yourself to a glass
7 of water if you would like.

8 A. Thank you, ma'am.

9 THE CORONER: I think you might have heard from my talking
10 to the previous witness we do need you, please, to be
11 quite close to the microphone so that people can hear
12 what you're saying.

13 A. I will do just that, ma'am.

14 THE CORONER: Thank you very much. Mr Maxwell-Scott, who's
15 standing up, is going to ask you questions initially on
16 my behalf, and then there may be questions from others.

17 A. Okay.

18 THE CORONER: Thank you very much.

19 Questions from MR MAXWELL-SCOTT

20 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Good afternoon. Can you give the court
21 your full name, please.

22 A. My name is Norman William Ebiowei.

23 Q. Were you sitting in court when the last witness was
24 giving evidence?

25 A. Just now?

1 Q. Yes.

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. Right. Well, that will probably help, because I'm
4 essentially going to ask you the same topics, so firstly
5 about your knowledge of Lakanal House and any fire
6 safety advice that you may have seen, and then secondly
7 about your experience in the fire in July 2009 itself.

8 So firstly if we could have a look at page 1050,
9 which is in file 3. (Handed) It's a London
10 Fire Brigade leaflet. It's four pages long. What I'd
11 like you to do, in your own time, is to look at the
12 first page and the next three pages and then help us as
13 best you can with whether you recognise the document and
14 whether or not you think you've seen it before.

15 A. To what page?

16 Q. To 1053, so four pages in total.

17 A. I believe I got this document from the council.

18 Q. Thank you. If you look on then to the document that
19 starts on page 1054. That's the first page of
20 a two-page document, and it's the same question: taking
21 as much time as you need, do you think you've seen that
22 document before?

23 A. I know I've seen these papers but I do not recall if
24 I went through them.

25 Q. Sorry, I didn't quite hear that?

1 A. I said I do not recall if I went through the papers.
2 I believe we got this file at home with my family, but
3 I do not recall going -- reading through them.

4 Q. You didn't read through them closely, so you think you
5 recognise them but you can't be sure because you didn't
6 read them in detail; is that right?

7 A. I believe I saw the first -- the -- they gave me a bunch
8 of papers. I believe I've seen something -- something
9 regarding the fire safety.

10 Q. Let me show you a third document that may help you.
11 1068 in the same bundle. If you want to see it on the
12 page, you can find it in your bundle in front of you.
13 The bottom right hand corner has a small number 27 in
14 it. Do you see that?

15 A. I do.

16 Q. So this is part of a longer document and what we have of
17 it are three pages which are a section on fire safety.
18 So that page, the next page, and finally this page with
19 a little 29 in the bottom right hand corner. Do you
20 think you recognise that document?

21 A. Like I said, I do not recognise the document but
22 I believe this document -- the whole of this document
23 was supplied to us as a packet during the day we got the
24 keys from the council.

25 Q. So you think this is part of a document that you were

1 given by the council?

2 A. I believe so.

3 Q. You can put that file away now. Do you remember ever

4 receiving what's called a home fire safety visit, which

5 is when a firefighter comes to your house or flat and

6 gives you some advice?

7 A. No.

8 Q. I'm going to move on now and ask you about aspects of

9 the layout of Lakanal House, whether you remembered or

10 knew about them at the time. Firstly, did you know how

11 many floors there were in the building?

12 A. I believe there were 14 floors.

13 Q. Do you remember, or did you know, how many flats there

14 were in the building in total?

15 A. Each flat has a bedroom upstairs, so if -- you mean

16 total -- how many flats?

17 Q. How many flats?

18 A. No, I don't know, I don't know.

19 Q. Okay. Did you know that each flat in the building was

20 essentially identical in layout to every other one?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. Did you have any feel for how the numbering system in

23 the block works? In other words, if you met somebody

24 outside the block of flats and they said, "I'm trying to

25 get to my friend in flat 28", would you have had any

1 idea where that is in the building?

2 A. Flat 28, to me --

3 Q. Just for example?

4 A. For example. Should be on the second floor.

5 Q. Do you mean the second level of flats and therefore the

6 3rd and 4th floors, or do you mean --

7 A. The second level of flats. I wouldn't know whether it's

8 on the left or on the right.

9 Q. Did you know that there were 14 flats per level?

10 A. Like I said previously, I don't know. I can only tell

11 in my section of the flats there were three flats, if

12 I remember -- yes, there were three flats in my section,

13 and opposite there were three also.

14 Q. So in your corridor there were three front doors on each

15 side?

16 A. Yeah, it could be four on the side. It could be four

17 flats on each side, but I can't remember -- but

18 I know -- if I'm not mistaken, it should be four or

19 three, yeah.

20 Q. And therefore in total either six or eight?

21 A. Either six or eight, correct.

22 Q. Making 14 in total on that floor?

23 A. Probably.

24 Q. Turning now to what happened inside the flats, you will

25 remember, I imagine, that when you go up the stairs

1 inside your flat you then have access to both sides of
2 the building?

3 A. Of course.

4 Q. And there are balconies which you can step out onto?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. Would it help to see a photo of one of those balconies
7 to remember?

8 A. I do remember, but if you want to show me, that's all
9 right. I think there's a balcony on the kitchen room
10 aspect of the house and also the living room.

11 Q. So that's what one of the balconies looked like?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. And you can see a door at the end. Do you know where
14 that door went?

15 A. It leads to the landing where you have the lifts,
16 I believe, yeah? Yes.

17 Q. Do you know what the point was of the balconies and the
18 doors off the balconies?

19 A. Can you repeat the question?

20 Q. Did you know what the point of having the balconies and
21 the doors that led off them was?

22 A. It's explicitly written as, "fire escape route".

23 Q. So you knew it was a fire escape route?

24 A. Yes, I do.

25 Q. Did you know at the time that it could be used to get

1 into the central staircase and from there, out of the
2 building?

3 A. Depends on where the fire's coming from.

4 Q. Do you just want to explain what you mean by that?

5 A. If the fire's coming from the neighbour, you're best
6 using the fire escape route. But if the fire is not
7 visible around the hallway, I think it's best to know
8 your location and use the normal route.

9 Q. So the obvious route is out of the front door and along
10 the internal corridor and into the stairs but if
11 necessary, you knew you could use the balcony route; is
12 that right?

13 A. If you knew where the -- the fire escape route is
14 leading, it's leading to the same point, where the
15 balcony passage route is leading, the normal passage
16 route. It's leading to the same place, and I can see
17 visibly where the fire's coming from, where the smoke is
18 coming from, so there was no point using the fire escape
19 route.

20 Q. No, I'm not asking you yet about what you did on 3 July.
21 I'm just checking, as with each resident we hear from,
22 whether they understood that the balcony was a fire
23 escape route which could be used to get to the central
24 staircase and out of the building. You did understand
25 that at the time, didn't you?

1 A. Can you rephrase?

2 Q. Before the fire in July 2009, you knew that the balcony
3 and the door at the end of it was part of a fire escape
4 route?

5 A. I knew, and I also knew it was awkward.

6 Q. In what sense was it awkward?

7 A. Because you have the door leading outside and you also
8 have the escape route leading to the same place, so if
9 there's a fire with my neighbour, I think it would be
10 best to use the escape route, but if there is no fire
11 from my neighbour, I have to use the same.

12 Q. I'm going to move on now and ask you about your
13 experience of the fire on 3 July 2009. I think at the
14 time you'd been living in the flat for about two years;
15 is that right?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. You were in flat 97, so on the top floor?

18 A. Exactly.

19 Q. With a front door and bedrooms on the west side of the
20 building?

21 A. Correct.

22 Q. Were you watching the Wimbledon men's semi-finals on
23 television that afternoon?

24 A. I recall so, yes.

25 Q. Whilst you were doing that, did something attract your

1 attention?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. And that was hearing a loud bang; is that right?

4 A. Yeah, I heard a loud bang. Yes, that's one of them.

5 Q. And you worked out that it was coming from outside your
6 flat?

7 A. Yes, I saw smoke coming outside my window.

8 Q. You gave a statement on 11 July 2009, so just a week or
9 so after the fire. Was your memory better then than it
10 is now, and would it help to you see the statement?

11 A. My memory then was better than now.

12 Q. So would you like to see the statement you made at the
13 time?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. That's at page 61 of the statements bundle. (Handed)
16 If you just take a moment to recognise it. Is that the
17 statement that you gave dated 11 July 2009? (Pause)

18 THE CORONER: Do you recognise that, Mr Ebiowei?

19 A. Yes, I do.

20 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Thank you. About three quarters of the
21 way down the first page, you refer to something catching
22 your attention outside, and you got up and went towards
23 the lounge window and balcony. So you were upstairs and
24 you went out onto the balcony on the east side of the
25 building; is that right?

1 A. Correct.

2 Q. And you could see black particles floating around and
3 you could smell smoke?

4 A. That's correct.

5 Q. And you could see that it was coming from the 9th floor;
6 is that right?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Your statement describes it in this way:
9 "It was as though I was looking down on the smoke of
10 a locomotive train. The smoke was dark grey."
11 Is that how it seemed at the time?

12 A. That is how it seems.

13 Q. You went on to say:
14 "It was much thicker at the source, a flat on the
15 9th floor. There was so much smoke, I knew it was
16 a very serious fire."
17 A. That is correct.

18 Q. Then you went downstairs to tell your wife. By
19 "downstairs", you mean downstairs within your flat?

20 A. Where the bedroom and the bathroom is situated.

21 Q. Then the statement says you went back up to the balcony
22 by the lounge and looked out again. The flat beneath
23 had even more intense smoke coming from it. You say:
24 "I knew we had to get out."
25 Why was that your feeling at the time?

1 A. I saw the -- the intensity of the smoke, you know, it
2 was like something sinister is going on downstairs, and
3 is not -- is a fire, and fire is dangerous, we need to
4 leave. It was just an instinct.

5 Q. Just an instinct. I understand. The statement says
6 that you ran inside shouting for everyone to get ready
7 to leave. You went into the bathroom and soaked about
8 eight towels, and you gave them to everyone, telling
9 them to put them over their faces?

10 A. Because I could smell -- I could smell the smoke coming
11 in through the doors. So at that moment I felt the only
12 way we could get out of here is to have something to
13 wrap around our faces.

14 Q. Your son was trying to put his shoes on, but you told
15 him there wasn't time to do that; is that right?

16 A. Yes, because I was partially naked too.

17 Q. You then got out into the corridor, presumably through
18 the front door?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. You were in a flat at the far end of the corridor from
21 the central staircase?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. Could you see the length of the corridor, towards the
24 doors onto the lift lobby, or not?

25 A. I could -- I think -- the visibility was okay. I could

1 see, but there was smoke.

2 Q. So there was some smoke but the visibility was good

3 enough to see to the end of the corridor?

4 A. Exactly.

5 Q. And in the corridor, I think you saw one of your

6 neighbours from flat 96; is that right?

7 A. The opposite neighbour is 97.

8 Q. You're in 97, aren't you?

9 A. 98, sorry.

10 Q. The opposite neighbour is 98?

11 A. 96 used to be a previous neighbour who came to visit us.

12 Q. Was it Georgia Thomas who's just given evidence that you

13 saw?

14 A. 98, yes.

15 Q. Is that whom you saw when you got into the corridor?

16 A. Yes, she was leaning out of the door.

17 Q. Did you then, with your family, make your way with her

18 and her children into the central staircase?

19 A. I told her we needed to leave, so we all moved as one

20 group.

21 Q. What was it like when you got into the central

22 staircase, firstly, on the 13th floor?

23 A. It was filled with smoke.

24 Q. What about the visibility?

25 A. The visibility was poor. But that was our only escape

1 route.

2 Q. The statement suggests that as you went down it got
3 worse, and at the 11th floor it was so bad that your
4 wife -- and, we assume, Georgia -- said they were
5 choking and couldn't go on. Do you remember that?

6 A. I do.

7 Q. What did you do to try and help them and the children?

8 A. My neighbour had a child with her. I think she had that
9 child too and I noticed she was choking and my wife also
10 was choking, so I said, "Okay, you guys give me the
11 children and you can move ahead of me", and I could see
12 my -- my neighbour was having difficulty moving, but she
13 eventually picked up courage and moved further.

14 So on the 8th floor or so, we saw firemen.

15 I believe it was 8th/7th floor, we saw firemen, and that
16 gave us more confidence.

17 Q. Did you take the children down ahead of the women?

18 A. I did. My daughter was three years old and I believe
19 her son was in that age group, so I carried them both.

20 Q. Did you keep on going down or did you go back up the
21 stairs at some point?

22 A. They were -- for obvious (Inaudible), they were behind
23 me and somehow I turned around and saw them, you know,
24 having difficulties descending the floor, so I decided
25 to go up back.

1 Q. What was it like going uphill, as it were, going
2 upstairs in those conditions?

3 A. It's like fighting for one's life. You don't remember
4 how you feel. The adrenalin was pumping, so I didn't
5 notice. I noticed it was difficult breathing, though,
6 but there was only one thing on my mind. We all got --
7 we all need to get out of here.

8 Q. In your statement, you say that the smoke was very
9 severe, you were having problems breathing and you felt
10 heat down one side of your body that was really intense
11 and uncomfortable and the smoke was burning your lungs.
12 Is that how you remember it now?

13 A. At then, yes, that is why -- that is how it is. But you
14 know, days/months have elapsed. Probably that initial
15 impression has left me, but at that time, that was how
16 the situation was.

17 Q. Your statement says:
18 "It was only the adrenalin that kept us going."
19 A. Of course, yes.

20 Q. Then you mentioned a moment or so ago that you passed
21 some firemen coming up the stairs and that gave you
22 encouragement?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. The statement says you passed six or seven firemen at
25 about the 5th floor? That was your best recollection at

1 the time?

2 A. At the time, yes.

3 Q. Is it right that they essentially left you to keep
4 walking downstairs as a group and they continued walking
5 upstairs as a group?

6 A. Yes, they continued walking upstairs as a group, and we
7 were quite relieved to see them, and the confidence they
8 were exuding, and it made us -- encouraged us more, so
9 we knew it was kind of safe. As at that time, we felt
10 safe, seeing them around.

11 Q. Did it start to get less smokey as you went down the
12 staircase?

13 A. It was smokey. I can't remember if it was less but it
14 was -- the smoke was thick. It was intense. I can't
15 remember. You want me to read through?

16 Q. It would probably be helpful just to look towards the
17 bottom of page 62.

18 A. Okay.

19 Q. There's a paragraph that starts:
20 "At the 5th floor we passed six or seven firemen
21 coming up the stairs. It was a massive relief, although
22 the conditions were easier the lower floors we got."

23 A. That's it.

24 Q. Is that because it got a bit less smokey?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. Then you got outside of the building, and according to
2 your statement one of your neighbours phoned a woman on
3 the 13th floor who was still inside her flat. You were
4 saying to her that she ought to come down and a fireman
5 overheard that; is that right?

6 A. That's correct.

7 Q. Then according to the statement:

8 "He'd obviously overheard what was going on so we
9 told him where to find the lady and he said they would
10 find her."

11 Is that right?

12 A. Could you rephrase, please?

13 Q. Just at the bottom of that page and going over onto the
14 next page, your statement reads:

15 "He'd [in other words, the fireman] obviously
16 overheard what was going on, so we told him where to
17 find the lady and he said they would find her."

18 A. Yes, that's what -- that's what happened.

19 Q. None of your immediate group needed to see the ambulance
20 crews?

21 A. My neighbour complained that -- as at that time, of
22 burns, but I think I was busy with my family at that
23 moment, so I didn't pay -- pay attention to her
24 complaint.

25 Q. You walked round to the other side of the building, the

1 west side, and could see that the fire was more intense
2 on that side?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Your statement says that it was chaotic amongst the
5 crowd, with people crying. Is that what it felt like at
6 the time?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. And you were just spectators?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. You stayed there for some hours?

11 A. I need a (indistinct)

12 THE CORONER: Mr Ebiowei, just take a moment. Have a glass
13 of water.

14 A. This threatened my children. It scared them. It could
15 have been my children too.

16 THE CORONER: Mr Ebiowei, do you want a break, or are you
17 happy to carry on?

18 A. Carry on.

19 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: I'm coming to the very end of my
20 questions. I was just going to ask you this: whilst you
21 were outside but remaining near the building, did anyone
22 from the emergency services come over and talk to you at
23 any stage?

24 A. They did.

25 Q. Were they from the Fire Brigade or were they from the

1 ambulance service or the police?

2 A. I think was both emergency -- police and emergency team.

3 Q. Was that about how you were all feeling physically, or
4 was it about anything else?

5 A. We all -- we all got out of a tragic situation and we
6 all believe we had something that needed to be checked,
7 so we followed the instruction to assemble in
8 a particular spot. We were all following instruction at
9 that moment. We were happy that we were out, so
10 nobody -- we weren't feeling anything in our bodies. We
11 could be hurt at that moment. There could be burns,
12 stuff like that, but we were not thinking about it. We
13 were just thinking about those that were upstairs and
14 our property and stuff like that.

15 Q. Thank you very much indeed. Those are my questions.

16 A. Thank you very much.

17 Questions from MR HENDY

18 MR HENDY: Sir, my name is Hendy. I represent three of the
19 bereaved families. This is obviously a terribly
20 distressing event for you, but my clients would like you
21 to know that in their view there is nothing more that
22 you could have done. You helped save your family, you
23 helped save Mrs Thomas' family. There is really nothing
24 more that you could have done that day.

25 I only have one question for you, and it's this: in

1 your flat, do you recall whether you had a smoke alarm
2 fitted or not?

3 A. There is a -- yes, there's a smoke alarm fitted, yes.

4 Q. Can you remember where it was positioned in your flat?

5 A. I think it was positioned between the living room and
6 the kitchen, the lounge and the kitchen.

7 Q. Between the living room and the kitchen?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Thank you very much.

10 THE CORONER: Mr Dowden? Ms Al Tai? Members of the jury,
11 do you have any questions for Mr Ebiowei?

12 Mr Ebiowei, thank you very much for coming. I'm
13 sorry it's such a distressing experience, but I am
14 grateful for the assistance. Thank you very much. You
15 are welcome to stay but if you would prefer to go, you
16 are free to go. Thank you very much.

17 (The witness withdrew)

18 THE CORONER: Yes.

19 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Madam, I propose finally this afternoon
20 to read two witness statements. Firstly Claudette
21 Williams, a statement dated 16 July 2009.

22 THE CORONER: Can we put that up on the screen?

23 Statement of CLAUDETTE WILLIAMS read

24 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: I'm afraid it's a small typeface but it's
25 up on the screen. She says:

1 "I live at 96 Lakanal, Sceaux Gardens, Camberwell,
2 SE57DP. I have lived there with my husband for about
3 six years. We also have a tenant but he was in Jamaica
4 at the time. Our flat is on the 13th floor and split
5 over two floors. The lower floor has two bedrooms and
6 a bathroom. The bedrooms are beneath the kitchen and
7 look out on the shops side of the block. Upstairs there
8 is a long and a kitchen. Each of these rooms accessed
9 the balcony on either side of the tower block.

10 "On Friday, 3 July 2009 I was at home alone from
11 about 3 pm. I had been cooking for just about an hour
12 and at about 4.15 pm I was sat in the lounge eating. It
13 was at this point I smelt a strong smell of burning
14 plastic. I thought that maybe something was burning in
15 the kitchen, so I went and checked. The kitchen door
16 was open, as was the small far window. Nothing was
17 burning in my flat, but I could see smoke outside of the
18 kitchen balcony. The smoke was coming straight up. It
19 was dark grey but not that thick. I tried to look over
20 the balcony to see where it was coming from. I felt
21 a really strong heat coming up that was obviously due to
22 a fire. I did not see any flames at this point. I went
23 inside and shut the door and windows. I then went
24 across to the balcony on the lounge side. I went
25 outside and saw that there was a slight thin smoke on

1 this side. It was not hot on this side. I knocked on
2 my immediate neighbour's window (kitchen). I think this
3 is number 98. No-one answered, so I went back inside.
4 It was now about 4.30 pm and I phoned my husband.
5 I told him what was happening and he told me to leave.
6 "I went down to the front door. When I opened it,
7 the corridor was thick with black smoke. I had to shut
8 the door and went and got a cardigan to wrap around my
9 mouth and nose. I was trying to be as calm as possible
10 but I was scared. I went out into the corridor again.
11 I could not see along the corridor at all. There was
12 a dry heat as well in the corridor. I had to feel my
13 way along the wall for about 25 metres until I reached
14 the stairwell. When I got to the stairs, I just ran
15 down as quickly as I could. I started to get a bit out
16 of breath doing this, but this was not due to the smoke.
17 It was much clearer in the stairwell. I do not remember
18 it being any worse on any particular floor than where
19 I started on the 13th.
20 "When I reached about the 3rd floor, I came across
21 three firemen pulling a house up the stairs. I cannot
22 remember if they had breathing masks on. They did not
23 speak to me and I carried on down. I did not see any
24 other residents. When I got to the bottom on the shop
25 side I found the area was cordoned off. I saw some

1 firemen there but couldn't tell you how many. I was
2 exhausted and frightened. I saw my neighbour downstairs
3 with her two children. She hugged me and told me that
4 she hadn't realised I was home. My neighbour gave me
5 a wet towel and I cleaned my nostrils. They were black
6 with soot. I looked up and saw that only one flat on
7 the 9th floor was on fire. I waited here for about
8 an hour making phone calls and watching what was
9 happening. I didn't need to see anyone from the
10 ambulances. I then went across to the other side of the
11 block and saw the fire was spreading up and down. There
12 was still a lot of flames even after this hour. I saw
13 a short black guy waving as though he was trapped on the
14 balcony. I think he was on about the 7th floor. The
15 Fire Brigade and police were moving us backwards towards
16 Havil Street. The man was on the balcony for about five
17 minutes, then went inside. I didn't see anyone else
18 with him. At about 6 pm I left to go and stay with
19 a relative.

20 "I have not known any fires in Lakanal before.
21 No-one smokes in our flat. I have never had any
22 maintenance problems with our premises. I think the
23 Fire Brigade worked very well from what I saw. They
24 looked organised. I have no complaints about anyone.
25 I do recognise one of the ladies that died but did not

1 see her on the day of the fire."

2 Then she gives a description of herself and goes on
3 to say that she spoke with the press on the Saturday
4 morning but was not filmed.

5 THE CORONER: Thank you.

6 Statement of ROBERT BAILEY read

7 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Finally I'll read the statement of Robert
8 Bailey, starting on page 10. His statement is dated
9 11 August 2009. He says:

10 "I live at 22 Lakanal, Sceaux Gardens, Camberwell,
11 SE57DP. I have lived here for approximately six months
12 with my daughter, Jacqueline, and her three year-old son
13 Dennis. Our flat is on the 3rd floor and split over two
14 levels. The lower floor has a bathroom and two bedrooms
15 which are beneath the kitchen. The upper level has
16 a lounge and kitchen. The lounge overlooks the shops
17 side of the block.

18 "On Friday, 3 July 2009, at around 4 pm, I got in
19 the shower to get ready for work. Approximately ten
20 minutes later I was getting dressed in my bedroom. The
21 bedroom window was open and I smelt smoke similar to
22 that of burning electrical wire. I looked out the
23 window and saw about six to seven people outside,
24 staring up at the block, causing a bit of a commotion.
25 There was clearly tension in the air. I went out of the

1 flat into the internal corridor. I saw a number of
2 children around and went towards the stairwell. At the
3 stairwell I saw some smoke billowing downwards. It was
4 not that bad and the people coming downstairs were not
5 panicking in any way. I felt I had time to return to
6 the flat and collect my possessions.

7 "I left the flat at around 4.30 pm. As I got to the
8 stairwell again, the smoke was considerably thicker.
9 People were coming down with their faces covered. There
10 was much more urgency now and people were clearly
11 panicking. I left as well. I did not pass any firemen
12 in the stairwell, but when I reached the bottom I saw
13 two fire engines. They had a couple of hoses, but
14 there[sic] were not very powerful and clearly wouldn't
15 have reached the fire. There appeared to be some
16 initial confusion with firemen running around looking
17 for hydrants.

18 "Once outside I looked up at the block and saw that
19 there was a flat on fire on the 9th floor. The flames
20 were clearly visible and very powerful. I heard two
21 loud explosion noises and smaller explosions. There was
22 breaking glass and debris falling from the flat.
23 I heard sirens approaching and left to go to catch my
24 bus to work.

25 "I did not return to Lakanal until the following

1 day. I gave a TV interview to ITV news. I did not
2 receive any injuries and required no medical assistance.

3 "I do not know of any other fires at Lakanal whilst
4 I've lived there. I do smoke roll-ups on the balcony of
5 the flat and occasionally flick them over the side. The
6 last cigarette I had at the flat that day would have
7 been at about 3.50 pm and I extinguished it in the
8 ashtray. The only maintenance problems we have
9 experienced were a leak in the kitchen that ran into the
10 electric circuit. This did take months to fix and it
11 should be logged with the council."

12 And then he gives a description of himself and
13 that's the end of the statement.

14 THE CORONER: Thank you very much. Yes, those are the two
15 statements that we were planning to deal with this
16 afternoon?

17 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Yes, they are.

18 THE CORONER: Members of the jury, remember that I told you
19 before the last statements were read last week that they
20 were just as important as the evidence you hear from the
21 witnesses who come in person, all right? Now, that's
22 the end of the evidence today. Just a preview for
23 tomorrow, please, Mr Maxwell-Scott?

24 MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Mr Atkins will be taking the witnesses
25 tomorrow. They will be firefighter Anthony Belmont

1 first, followed by firefighter Nicholas Sanchez, and
2 they were from the Old Kent Road fire station, the
3 second pair who were committed. Following that, there
4 will be firefighters Peter Mason and Tony Mechen, and
5 they were the third pair who went into flat 65. Then
6 finally a resident, Kelvin Udi.

7 THE CORONER: Thank you very much. Members of the jury,
8 that's all that we're going to be dealing with with you
9 this afternoon, so thank you again for your patience and
10 listening so carefully. Please be back here tomorrow
11 for a prompt start at 10 o'clock, and in the meantime
12 please don't forget the warnings that you must not
13 discuss the case with anyone and you must not carry out
14 any private research of your own. Thank you very much.
15 Please go with Mr Graham.

16 (In the absence of the Jury)

17 THE CORONER: Yes, is there anything anyone would like to
18 raise before we finish this afternoon?

19 MR HENDY: Madam, the answers to the questions for the jury.
20 I see it's 3.20. I wonder if it would be convenient for
21 the advocates to have a word with each other. I don't
22 know, madam, whether you'd be available, say, within the
23 next half hour? We could --

24 THE CORONER: Yes, of course.

25 MR HENDY: -- resolve or not resolve issues by 3.50.

1 THE CORONER: Yes, of course, that's fine. I shall be here,
2 so if someone could get a message to me.

3 MR HENDY: So we can have finality on the issue by today.

4 THE CORONER: Okay. If I could know by 4 o'clock whether
5 I'm needed or not, whether there's anything to resolve,
6 but that time is quite moveable if necessary.

7 MR HENDY: Thank you very much.

8 THE CORONER: All right. Thank you very much.

9 (3.20 pm)

10 (A short break)

11 (3.50 pm)

12 (The Court adjourned until 10 o'clock the following day)

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