

LANCASHIRE COUNTY FIRE BRIGADE

INCIDENT: TALBOT SHOWROOMS
TALBOT ROAD
BLACKPOOL

NATURE: BUILDING

TIME OF CALL: 1758 HOURS

DATE: 5 MAY 1990

The following storyboard is designed to illustrate the events and circumstances at the above incident, from the time of arrival of the first crews, up to and including the rescue of Fm 1 from Station A31 Bispham and the realisation that Fm John Singleton from Station A31 Bispham had become a victim of the fire.

The storyboard is intended for information only and has been collated from the following reference sources:

- a) Police and amateur video tapes taken at the incident.
- b) Still photographs of the incident.
- c) Narratives furnished by personnel who played key roles at the incident.
- d) Interviews conducted by myself with individuals and with collective groups.
- e) Journal printer print out and incident 'tip-sheet'.

C O N T E N T S

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	1
APPLIANCE A301, PUMP EMERGENCY TENDER, BLACKPOOL FIRE STATION	3-8
APPLIANCE A300, PUMP LADDER BLACKPOOL FIRE STATION	9-19
APPLIANCE A310, PUMP LADDER BISPHAM FIRE STATION	20-30
APPLIANCE A370, PUMP LADDER SOUTH SHORE FIRE STATION	31-38
APPLIANCE A360, PUMP LADDER ST ANNES FIRE STATION	39-40
APPLIANCE A361, RETAINED PUMP ST ANNES FIRE STATION	41-43
APPLIANCE A320, PUMP LADDER FLEETWOOD FIRE STATION	44-47
APPLIANCE A350, PUMP LADDER (RETAINED) LYTHAM FIRE STATION	48
ASSISTANT DIVISIONAL OFFICER 1	49-53
DIVISIONAL COMMANDER 1	54-55
SUMMARY	56-58
APPENDIX 'A'	

APPLIANCE A301, PUMP EMERGENCY TENDER, BLACKPOOL FIRE STATION

The appliance was mobilised to the incident at approximately 1758 hours and booked in attendance at approximately 1800 hours with the following crew members:

- | | |
|------------------|--------|
| 1. Sub Officer 3 | Oic |
| 2. Fm 8 | Driver |
| 3. Fm 9 | |
| 4. Fm 10 | |

As the crew responded to the incident Fm 9 and 10 donned their Breathing Apparatus without going under air. At Collingwood Avenue all crew members became aware of large volumes of black smoke coming from the direction of the incident. The pump ladder A300 was mobilised to the incident at the same time as A301 and was behind A301 all the way to the incident. The officer in charge of the pump ladder, Station Officer 1, warned Sub Officer 3 via radio that the appliances were proceeding to a 'working job'.

On approaching the incident via Mather Street the movement of both appliances was restricted by heavy traffic congestion which effectively blocked the Mather Street/Talbot Road junction. Both appliances halted on Mather Street before reaching Talbot Road.

The pump emergency tender parked level with an alleyway leading to the west side of the affected building. Some three metres in front of the building was a 1.5m boundary wall which skirted that side of the premises. Black smoke and flames were issuing out of two ground floor windows. Two crew members, Fm 9 and 10 were committed to running out hose and providing two jets to tackle the fire at the boundary wall site. Fm 9 and 10 both recall that the fire and smoke which was coming from the two ground floor windows was rolling up the face of the building. The fire coming from the left hand window appeared to be re-entering a broken window directly above on the first floor. Fm 9 assumed that the window had been penetrated by the fire. As they were tackling the fire Leading Fireman 1 relayed information to them that the premises may contain a LPG hazard.

Within a short period of time Station Officer 1 who had carried out an initial circuit assessment of the incident, arrived at the location on the building side of the perimeter wall. He instructed Fm 9 and 10 to re-position their jets over the perimeter wall to the building side. The wall was scaled using a triple extension ladder and the hose and branches repositioned inside the perimeter wall.

Once they had re-positioned their jets Fm 9 and 10 were in a better position to assess the extent of the fire. From this vantage point they could both clearly see the fire through all the ground floor windows and recorded that it was well alight. Both recognised some form of industrial heater on the wall between the second and third windows from the left hand side. Fm 9 could also see racks holding rolls of carpet and it was these carpets that were on fire. Both of them realised that the

underside of the first floor was starting to burn. Fm 10 also noticed fire to his left behind a short wall as he looked into the building.

They carried on fighting the fire which diminished to the extent that the flames were 'knocked' and the black smoke had turned to 'pale-grey'. At this stage Fm 9 commented to Fm 10 that the time was 1820 hours. That comment was made to indicate that it had taken 20 minutes to bring the blaze under control.

At this juncture Assistant Divisional Officer 1 arrived at this section of the building. He was on the flat roof of a single storey section of the building overlooking the location. He instructed Fm 9 and 10 who were still wearing BA, to gain access to the first floor via the external fire escape which was sited approximately 10 metres away towards the rear of the building. Fm 9 and 10 were joined by Leading Fireman 3 and Fm 11 who were part of the crew from Station A32 Fleetwood. Sub Officer 2 the OIC of appliance A370 South Shore, had been instructed by Assistant Divisional Officer 1 to take control of activities at that side of the building. Sub Officer 2 committed Fm 9 and 10, along with Leading Fireman 3 and Fm 11 to the task of forcing entry to the first floor via the external escape taking with them a firefighting jet.

NOTE 1

It is clear from information gained from narratives and interviews with Sub Officer 2 Leading Fireman 3 Fm 9 and Fm 10 that each of them clearly thought that prior to attempting an entry via the external escape the fire had been brought under control.

Very soon after starting the attempt to gain entry to the first floor the attempt had to be aborted. The pale grey smoke had suddenly transformed into large volumes of dense black hot smoke which appeared to be being forced out of all openings under pressure.

At this stage Fm 9 and 10 were retreating down the external fire escape when they heard someone shout that a fireman was trapped at first floor level. They both heard a Distress Signal Unit sounding and saw a triple extension ladder being pitched to the first floor window. Leading Fireman 3 and Fm 11 were both at the foot of the external fire escape and had heard Sub Officer 2 shout for the triple extension ladder to be re-assembled (the ladder used to scale the boundary wall) and pitched to the first floor corner window. They also heard him say that he had heard a Distress Signal Unit sounding.

The triple extension ladder was assembled very quickly - by the time Leading Fireman 3 and Fm 11 had covered the 10 metres from the base of the external fire escape the ladder was being pitched towards the first floor window in question.

While the ladder was being pitched Leading Fireman 3 directed a jet towards the window opening which was at this stage

obliterated by thick black smoke. He used the jet for no more than 15 seconds before the ladder pitch was completed and he climbed the ladder for his first rescue attempt.

NOTE 2

Leading Fireman 3 and Fm 11's actions regarding rescue and rescue attempts are described in detail later when the report deals with the actions of the crew of appliance A320 Fleetwood.

On Leading Fireman 3's second ascent of the ladder he made contact with Fm 1, and assisted him down the ladder. Sub Officer 2 noted that Fm 1 was in a poor physical and mental condition. Fm 1's BA face mask was removed and he informed Sub Officer 2 that 'John' meaning Fm Singleton his team mate, was still inside to the right of the window. Further rescue attempts were made under extremely arduous conditions. At this stage Sub Officer 4, OIC appliance A320 Fleetwood, appeared from the rear of the premises blowing his evacuation whistle. At approximately the same time Sub Officer 3 came from the Talbot Road side of the premises also sounding his evacuation whistle.

NOTE 3

The fact that Fm 1 was rescued before the evacuation whistles were actuated by Sub Officer 4 and 3 assists in determining an approximate time to events - Divisional Commander 1's call sign 0A01 closed at the incident at 1826:29 hours. He parked on Talbot Road opposite Bond Street Fabrics, changed into fire gear and, as he made his way towards Assistant Divisional Officer 1, personnel began sounding evacuation whistles. Allowing time for changing into fire gear a realistic time would place evacuation whistle initiation at approximately 1828:30 hours - at about this time Fm 1 had been rescued, and, in all probability events had overtaken Fm Singleton.

During the rescue and rescue attempts Fm 9 under instructions from Sub Officer 2 directed a jet into the window in an attempt to give the men using the ladder some protection from the heat, and in an effort to disperse smoke from the now obliterated window openings whilst at the same time trying to alleviate conditions for anyone inside. Fm 10 was engaged in footing the ladder and supporting the efforts of Leading Fireman 3 and Fm 11 in their attempts to rescue Fm Singleton. The heat and smoke soon became unbearable quickly rendering the situation totally untenable at which stage rescue operations were aborted and personnel withdrawn to the other side of the perimeter wall and jets got to work on the building which in a very short time span was well alight with flames at all openings.

Sub Officer 3 was the Officer in Charge of the appliance. On arrival at the incident he instructed the driver, Fm 8 to park the appliance and committed Fm 9 and 10 to providing two firefighting jets to tackle the fire at the boundary wall site. He left the driver to provide a water supply while he ran down the alleyway with Station Officer 1 to assess the incident. Station Officer 1 instructed him to

send an assistance message to BHQ Control "Make pumps six". Sub Officer 3 sent the message from appliance A301.

NOTE 4

Assistance message "make pumps six" timed at 1801:34 hours.

He reported back to Station Officer 1 advised him that the message had been sent, and received instructions to ensure that water supplies and jets from Mather Street were established into and out of appliance A301 (Sub Officer 3 appliance). He then assisted the pump operator Fm 8 to run out hose from a hydrant at the west side of the Talbot Road/Mather Street junction to establish a water feed into appliance A301. He instructed Fm 8 to twin the feed in order to provide an adequate water supply for the two firefighting jets in use from the appliance. He then returned to the front of the building on Talbot Road as appliances from South Shore (A370) and Bispham (A310) stations arrived at the incident.

At this stage Sub Officer 3 felt that the firefighting actions implemented were proving successful. He had noticed that the smoke levels were reduced and had turned a lighter colour. As Assistant Divisional Officer 1 arrived at the incident he reported to him along with Station Officer 1 Assistant Divisional Officer 1 was given an update of actions taken and all information was exchanged.

Assistant Divisional Officer 1 committed Station Officer 1 to carry out further assessment of the situation and instructed Sub Officer 3 to send an informative message to BHQ Control and request the attendance of the Turntable Ladder.

NOTE 5

Message timed at 1812 hours

"From Assistant Divisional Officer 1 - a building used as a furniture warehouse. Two floors, first floor well alight. Whole of premises smoke logged. 4 Breathing Apparatus, 4 Jets. TTL required at Talbot Road side."

Sub Officer 3 reported back to Assistant Divisional Officer 1 that the message had been sent. At approximately 1816 hours Assistant Divisional Officer 1 instructed Sub Officer 3 to send an assistance message to BHQ Control "Make pumps ten for Breathing Apparatus".

NOTE 6

Message timed at 1816:33 - Both assistance and informative messages were relayed from appliance A300 which had moved position to the east corner of the building on Talbot Road.

Sub Officer 3 reported back to Assistant Divisional Officer 1 and informed him that the message had been sent. Assistant Divisional Officer 1 instructed him to ensure that an adequate water supply was maintained to the fireground. Acting on these instructions Sub Officer 3 detailed the crews of 'the next couple of appliances' to obtain water from Mansfield Road as he considered that to be the location of the

nearest, but as yet unused, pressure fed supply.

After initiating these actions he assisted Station Officer 1 and Fireman 12 to slip and pitch a 10.5m ladder to a single storey section of the front, west side of the building. Station Officer 1 informed him that this had been done to provide an alternative exit for personnel on the first floor should they need it.

Soon after this evacuation whistles started to be sounded. Sub Officer 3 started to blow his whistle from his position near the foot of the 10.5m ladder, then ran around to the Mather Street side to ensure that the evacuation signals had been communicated to the personnel working there. As he arrived at the site he noticed Sub Officer 4 who was blowing his evacuation whistle. He also noticed that a triple extension ladder had been pitched to a first floor window and personnel were involved in trying to get up the ladder under the supervision of Sub Officer 2. He noted that their attempts were being hampered by the heat and smoke. Sub Officer 2 appraised him of the situation and Sub Officer 3 quickly returned to the front of the building to report the information to Assistant Divisional Officer 1.

NOTE 7

Sub Officer 3 has no recall regarding seeing Fireman 1 who had been rescued. He does remember seeing Sub Officer 4 who had arrived shortly after Fm 1 had been rescued.

After reporting to Assistant Divisional Officer 1 and because of the rapidly deteriorating conditions Sub Officer 3 instructed Fm 13 the operator of the Turntable Ladder from Station A37 South Shore, to use the head of the ladder to break the first floor windows in an effort to ventilate and possibly ease the conditions inside.

After this point much of his efforts were aimed at augmenting water supplies to the fireground, directing oncoming appliances and crews to Devonshire Road and Westcliffe Drive.

The final member of the crew of the Pump Emergency Tender A301, Blackpool was Fm 8. He was the driver and pump operator of the appliance and on arrival at the incident parked his appliance as instructed by Sub Officer 3. He engaged the power take off, alighted from the appliance cab, removed the tray of flaked 45mm hose from the pump locker, selected the low pressure pumping mode, opened the delivery and set the pump revs. He was aware that Appliance A300, the second appliance from Station A30 Blackpool was parked behind him and while Fm 9 and 10 ran out the hose for two firefighting jets, Fm 2 the driver of appliance A300, fed his tank water supply to Fm 8 appliance. After checking that Fm 9 and 10 were getting good firefighting jets he shipped a standpipe at the hydrant on the west side of Talbot Road/Mather Street junction. Sub Officer 3 helped him to get the initial feed into his appliance then instructed him to twin the feed to ensure an adequate supply to both firefighting jets.

NOTE 8

Fm 8 stated that he was concerned because he was slightly over drawing his water supply but that supply was capable of providing and maintaining four bars pressure to both jets.

Fm 8 also assisted the driver of appliance A370 South Shore to ship a standpipe and run hose from a hydrant at the corner of Douglas Avenue and Foxdale Avenue. This supply went in to appliance A370. Fm 8 remembers that after this operation his pump was still supplying the two firefighting jets with 4 bars pressure despite the hydrant feed being slightly overdrawn.

Some time later Sub Officer 2 instructed Fm 8 to take a BA entry control board and a large axe and accompany him down Mather Street. Fm 12 took over Fm 8 pump operating duties.

Fm 8 then acted as BA entry control officer for a team who were tasked to enter the building from the external fire escape.

NOTE 9

The team in question were Fm 9 and 10 along with Leading Fireman 3 and Fm 11 - Fm 8 location was on the opposite side of the perimeter wall to the team.

Fm 8 took the four BA tallies for the team and, whilst recording their details on to the entry control board, he heard a "Distress Signal Unit start to sound, a scream and evacuation whistles start". This all seemed to take place within seconds. He looked over the wall and saw large quantities of black smoke pouring out of ground and first floor windows.

Sub Officer 2 shouted for the triple extension ladder to be re-assembled and pitched to the left hand window at first floor level. Fm 8 passed a section of the ladder over the wall to someone wearing BA.

NOTE 10

At this stage Fm 8 narrative regarding the sequence of events becomes confused. He is under the impression that Sub Officer 1 and Fm 4 joined him as he handed the ladder section over the boundary wall - this did not occur at that stage. His recall of events has telescoped their sequence into simultaneous activity. However he was aware of the fact that the area was now affected by dense black smoke and that he asked if he should bring a resuscitator but Sub Officer 2 told him that one had been brought to the site.

When Fm 8 looked over the wall again he could see that Fm 1 was there, slumped on the floor in his BA Set. He was in an exhausted state. Fm 8 jumped over the wall and removed Fm 1 BA Set. His face mask was already off as was his helmet. The main cylinder valve was still open and his Distress Signal Unit was sounding. Fm 8 assisted Fm 1 over the wall then after closing the main cylinder valve on Fm 1 BA set he passed that over the wall.

APPLIANCE A300, PUMP LADDER, BLACKPOOL FIRE STATION

This appliance was mobilised along with appliance A301, Pump Emergency Tender as the pre-determined attendance to the incident. Both appliances were mobilised at approximately 1758 hours and both were in attendance at the incident at approximately 1800 hours.

NOTE 11

Incident tip-sheet information indicates that A300 closed at the incident at 1810:29 hours - this information is wrong. A300 followed A301 all the way to the incident, narrative information and police video information clearly show that A300 were in attendance at the same time as A301 ie 1800 hours.

Appliance A300, pump ladder, Blackpool Fire Station crew members was as follows:

Station Officer 1	- Officer in Charge
Fireman 2	- Driver
Leading fireman 1	
Fireman 3	

As the appliance turned into Collingwood Avenue all crew members became aware of a plume of black smoke emanating from the direction of the address they were proceeding to. Using personal radio facility Station Officer 1 contacted appliance A301 and instructed crews of both appliances to prepare for a 'working job'. He gave instructions for Breathing Apparatus to be donned and for water supply information to be researched.

NOTE 12

The short travel time from station to incident precluded water supply information being gained at that time. Crew members had only enough time to don fire kit and Breathing Apparatus before arrival.

On arrival at Mather Street their progress was halted due to heavy vehicular congestion at Talbot Road/Mather Street junction. The appliance was parked behind the Pump Emergency Tender A301. Leading Fireman 1 and Fm 3 assisted Fm 9 and 10 to run out hose down the alleyway to the scene of fire. Leading Fireman 1 and Fm 3 saw thick black smoke and flames coming from ground floor windows on the side of the building facing the alleyway. The hose was run out and the two firefighting jets were manned by Fm 9 and 10. Leading Fireman 1 then instructed Fm 3 to check the appliance hydrant register to obtain information regarding available water supplies. During this series of events Station Officer 1 had instructed Sub Officer 3 to send an assistance message to BHQ control making pumps six.

Station Officer 1 then ran to the front of the building on Talbot Road to assess the situation there. Whilst at Talbot

Road he noticed that the ground floor windows were smoke stained but there was no visible sign of fire. He then completed a quick circuit of the building arriving back at the alleyway site but on the building side of the perimeter wall. At this stage flames as well as smoke were clearly visible and he instructed Fm 9 and 10 to scale the wall to enable their jets to be in a position to make a better attack on the fire.

NOTE 13

At some stage during these events information had been gained that the premises may contain a LPG hazard. Leading Fireman 1 had passed this information on to Fm 9 and 10 prior to them scaling the perimeter wall. Station Officer 1 recollection of gaining this information was timed after he had committed them to scale the perimeter wall.

Having got the two firefighting jets effectively attacking the seat of fire Station Officer 1 gave instructions for his appliance, A300 pump ladder, to be relocated on Talbot Road at the east side along with Leading Fireman 1 and Fm 3

Fm 2 the pump operator/Driver disconnected the hose feeding his tank supply into A301, pump emergency tender, drove the appliance onto Talbot Road where he parked at the east corner adjacent to an alleyway running down the east side of the premises. He shipped a standpipe into the hydrant on Talbot Road junction with the alleyway and acquired a twin feed into his pump from the hydrant. Leading Fireman 1 and Fm 3 joined him and ran out a line of 70mm hose with a branch down the alleyway with the intention of providing an attack from that side.

Fm 3 noted that windows on the front and at the east side alleyway were blackened by smoke from the inside. He also noted that a quantity of smoke, black in colour, was issuing from what appeared to be a fixed timber louvred vent at the head of a ground floor window down the east alleyway. This window was the one Leading Fireman 1 and Fm 3 intended to attack from. Fm 3 further noted that all windows were intact with no visible signs of heat crazing. Leading Fireman 1 was informed by the pump operator, Fm 2 that he had been instructed to provide a jet from his appliance for a team from Station A31 Bispham.

Fm 2 told Leading Fireman 1 that Sub Officer 1 Officer in Charge of Bispham's appliance needed the water for his men who were about to enter the building at Talbot Road wearing Breathing Apparatus. Leading Fireman 1 and Fm 3 held back. At this stage Leading Fireman 1 questioned the premises keyholder where he gained information regarding the fact that there was not a LPG hazard. He also received information regarding the site location of the gas and electricity supply. Leading Fireman 1 passed on the information regarding the supposed LPG hazard and then entered the premises on Talbot Road through the entrance used by the Bispham Breathing Apparatus team. He found the gas and electric-

ity intakes behind some panelling, noticed that the electricity had been isolated then isolated the gas supply.

While Leading Fireman 1 was engaged in these activities Fm 3 looked through the window into the building. The window had been broken earlier by Leading Fireman 1 and Fm 3. He gained the impression that a wall extended across his view with a return wall to his right. This gave the impression of a bay some 2m by 3m effectively restricting vision any further into the building. When Leading Fireman 1 returned he and Fm 3 were instructed to enter the building by Assistant Divisional Officer 1. They were told to make an entry, find and fight the fire on that floor. As they were to penetrate the building Leading Fireman 1 decided to change the hose line from 70mm down to 45mm because he suspected that they would encounter a good deal of congestion once inside. The 45mm hose would be more easily manoeuvred. This was quickly done and they handed in their tallies to Fm 2 who was acting as their Breathing Apparatus entry control officer. Fm 2 entered their records on his entry control board and can recall that the time of entry for Leading Fireman 1 and Fm 3 was 1817 hours.

Prior to entering the building Leading Fireman 1 noted that black smoke was 'pouring out of it'. He removed his glove to test the temperature, checked that they had a good water supply then followed Fm 3 into the building.

Once inside the building past the smoke that was issuing from the window both men noted that visibility was surprisingly good. Fm 3 realised that the 'wall' he had seen from outside the building was, in fact, a row of what he describes as display cabinets holding rollers containing sample carpet squares. Once round these 'display cabinets' they could both see frames containing full rolls of carpets set in rows down the centre of the room. Two pockets of fire could be seen on the far side of the room towards the centre. They manoeuvred their way towards these pockets of fire, threading hose through the frames carrying the carpet rolls to avoid the hose kinking. Fm 3 had the branch whilst Leading Fireman 1 was following up dragging the hose. As Leading Fireman 1 was dragging the hose he recalls touching one of the carpet display frames and was surprised to note the high temperature to his hands through his gloves.

As they progressed towards the pockets of fire it became obvious to Fm 3 that the pockets of fire involved display cabinets with carpet squares similar to the ones encountered as they entered the window. He noted that two of these display cabinets were on fire on either side of another cabinet which was not on fire. Whilst Fm 3 tackled the pockets of fire Leading Fireman 1 was on the other side of a frame of full carpet rolls feeding nose through towards Fm 3. Leading Fireman 1 looked to his right and could see daylight from the front of the building at Talbot Road from the open front door through which the Bisham crew had made their entry, and where he himself had earlier isolated the gas supply. He could plainly see firefighters crouched in the doorway and he gained the im-

pression that BA wearers were making their way inside. Meanwhile Fm 3 had managed to extinguish the flames on the side of the 'display cabinets' facing him but fire appeared to be coming from the rear of the 'cabinets'. Fm 3 turned towards Leading Fireman 1 to ask him to help drag the hose further towards the front of the building. As he did so, Fm 3 could still clearly see back across the room to the window which they had entered. When Fm 3 turned towards the front of the building he could also see the opening at Talbot Road with firefighters crouched in the doorway. Leading Fireman 1 returned round to the other side of the frame of carpet rolls to feed more hose through, at this time Fm 3 was still directing his jet at the cabinets. He raised his jet to try and bounce water onto the rear of the cabinets but only succeeded in dislodging several ceiling tiles.

Within a matter of seconds the situation rapidly deteriorated. Leading Fireman 1 could, to his left, see a narrow band of flame at ceiling height stretching across the premises. The flames appeared to be bright yellow and were advancing towards him. He shouted for Fm 3 to bring the firefighting jet back to him and began to drag back the hose towards him. He felt for his radio to inform personnel of the situation which he thought could threaten other teams inside the building. His radio pack had somehow become dislodged during his manoeuvring and all that remained was the 'vox' box. Fm 3 had not responded to Leading Fireman 1 initial shout, he heard Leading Fireman 1 shout again, more urgently, Fm 3 made his way around the rack of carpet rolls and joined Leading Fireman 1. He could now see the reason for the urgency in Leading Fireman 1 shout. He could see a wall of flame at ceiling level advancing towards them with a flame front approximately 1/3 metre in depth. As they re-positioned the branch to meet the advancing wall of flame Leading Fireman 1 remembers hearing Station Officer 1 voice coming from the direction of the window they had entered.

By the time the firefighting jet was in position the wall of flame had deepened and was rolling towards them mixed with dense black smoke. The flame front passed over them going towards the front of the building with a flame front approximately 1 metre deep. Dense black smoke descended almost to floor level and as it did so the temperature rapidly rose. The water supply to their jet dropped, rendering it useless, visibility was virtually nil. Leading Fireman 1 realised that escape towards their window entrance was impossible. He told Fm 3 to follow him towards the front of the building. As they started towards the front of the building Leading Fireman 1 could hear noises of objects falling around him. He also thought he heard noises from the floor above and attributed these noises to the movement of personnel on the first floor. At this stage both of them realised that their situation was desperate. Leading Fireman 1 made a dash towards, what he thought and hoped was the front exit to Talbot Road. He crashed into the bottom of the staircase leading to the first floor, his momentum carrying him up the first three steps. Fireman 3 stumbled and fell to the floor, at floor level he could see the exit through the

thinner layer of smoke. Fm 3 grabbed Leading Fireman 1 showing him the way to the front door. As they emerged from the building Leading Fireman 1 recalls that evacuation whistles were being sounded. Both of them reported to Fm 2 BA entry control officer, and retrieved their BA tallies. They both became involved in trying to retrieve hose from the east alleyway which, by this stage was seriously affected by the fire. Flames were belching out of the window they had entered earlier and were impinging on the gable end of a row of terraced houses across the alleyway. Both Leading Fireman 1 and Fm 3 carried out further firefighting duties, servicing of Breathing Apparatus and pump operating duties.

Fireman 2 was the driver of the appliance and after parking the appliance behind the Pump Emergency Tender A301 he was in the process of relaying his pump tank water supply to the Pump Emergency Tender when he was instructed by Station Officer 1 to move his appliance to the east side of Talbot Road. He emptied the bulk of his tank water supply, disconnected the hose line and drove the appliance to Talbot Road where he set into a hydrant on Talbot Road near the junction of the alleyway running down the east side of the premises. Fm 2 remembers seeing appliances A310 Bispham and A370 South Shore approaching along Talbot Road as he was completing the task of coupling twinned lines of hose from the hydrant in to his appliance pump.

NOTE 14

According to the journal printer print-out, appliance A310 closed at the incident at 1808 hours. There is not a time recorded on the incident tip-sheet for this appliance because A310 booked Mobile Available instead of Mobile Incident. Therefore the computer deleted the appliance from the incident. However, because following Mobile Available appliance A310 did correct their status and re-book Mobile Incident the journal printer picked it up and when they did close down at the incident the time of A310 was recorded only on the journal printer print-out.

Appliance A370 failed to book in attendance by radio when closing at the incident probably due to oversight or status fail/try again due to the large amount of radio traffic. However the timer display on the Police video tape clearly shows the crew of A370 running out hose at 1807/8 hours. It is fair to assume, therefore, that at approximately 1808 Fm 2 had parked his appliance A300 Blackpool at Talbot Road East and had secured a twin feed water supply at that time from the indicated hydrant. Also A310 Bispham and A370 South Shore were in attendance at the incident.

As appliance A310 Bispham manoeuvred to park behind Fm 2 appliance he saw Station Officer 1 re-direct the appliance to park on the opposite side of Talbot Road. Leading Fireman 1 and Fm 3 arrived at Fm 2 appliance and between the three of them they ran out a line of 70mm hose with a branch down the east alleyway towards a window on the side of the premises in anticipation of attacking the incident from that point.

Fm 2 noted that although he had acquired a twin feed water supply in to his appliance he felt that the pressure was not good enough to supply a good firefighting jet. He recalls that he asked the driver/pump operator of Bispham's appliance A310 to supply him with a feed from another hydrant.

NOTE 15

Fm 2 recall of what supply of water he had coming in to his appliance varies and contradicts the version supplied by Sub Officer 1 and Fm 4 from appliance A310 - Fm 2 was under the impression that Fm 4 provided a feed from a hydrant further east along Talbot Road. He believes that Fm 4 provided that line of hose into his appliance as he, Fm 2 disconnected one of the twin feeds from the hydrant he had previously set in to on Talbot Road at the junction with the east side alleyway. Fm 4 is absolutely sure that he shipped the standpipe into a hydrant 3 or 4 lengths east along Talbot Road then fed that supply into his own pump. Sub Officer 1 is under the distinct impression that Fm 2 appliance was fed by twin lines from the hydrant at the junction of Talbot Road and the alleyway on the east side of the building. What is accepted by all three personnel is that the 45mm hose line that Fm Singleton and 1 took into the building initially was supplied from Fm 2 appliance.

Fm 2 felt that he was now in a position to supply a good firefighting jet to Leading Fireman 1 and Fm 3 at the side of the building. Before he could accomplish this he was instructed by Sub Officer 1 to supply appliance A310's BA team with a jet from his pump first because Sub Officer 1 team were about to make an entry into the building from Talbot Road. Fm 2 remembers that he ran a length of hose for Sub Officer 1 team and they entered the building via the main entrance on Talbot Road. He recalls seeing Sub Officer 1 communicating with them by personal radio.

Fm 2 further recalls that he initially supplied Sub Officer 1 team, who were Fm Singleton and Fm 1 with a pressure of 4 bars. He says that Sub Officer 1 asked him to increase it to 5 bars which Fm 2 says he did.

During this sequence of events Leading Fireman 1 and Fm 3 had received instructions from Assistant Divisional Officer 1 to enter the building from the east alleyway. They had changed the hose line from 70mm to 45mm and at this stage Fm 2 took their BA tallies and entered up their details. He remembers that Leading Fireman 1 and Fm 3 made their entry at 1817 hours. He also notes that he was capable of providing 5 bars pressure to both firefighting jets that he was supplying. At this stage he had formed the impression that the fire situation was under control, smoke was diminishing and had changed to a 'light grey' colour.

Fm 2 relates that after what appeared to be a few minutes, he heard a muffled noise from inside the building. He

initially thought that something had collapsed on the far side of the building. Within seconds he noticed that his pump pressure gauge had started to fluctuate and he was unable to maintain pressure without using his tank supply. He then saw Sub Officer 4 running round the building blowing his evacuation whistle. Fm 2 ran to the window on the east alleyway where Leading Fireman 1 and Fm 3 had entered. He blew his own evacuation whistle at the window area. Within the space of seconds the previously 'light-grey' smoke had turned to thick black smoke and then a 'large jet of flame' came out of the window. Fm 2 can recall that the hose line taken into the building by Leading Fireman 1 and Fm 3 appeared to have been burnt away. Fm 2 crouched down as adjacent windows blew out and 'jets of flame burst out across the alleyway'. He ran back to his appliance.

Within a short period of time Fm 2 was relieved to see 3 BA teams had emerged from the front of the building, amongst them were his own team of Leading Fireman 1 and Fm 3 who returned to him to collect their BA tallies. Within seconds the corner display windows blew out and flames shot across the alleyway impinging on the gable end of the row of terraced houses.

Windows on the front of the building were starting to crack and the heat was increasing rapidly. He started to turn off the hydrant in an effort to retrieve it before it was damaged but the intensity of the heat forced him to abandon his efforts.

At around this stage Assistant Divisional Officer 1 ran up to him and instructed him to send a message back to BHQ Control "Three persons have failed to respond to evacuation signal".

NOTE 16

This message was timed at 1836:10, originated by Divisional Commander 1

From this point onwards Fm 2 was primarily engaged in supplying water for firefighting and protection of the adjacent row of terraced houses.

Station Officer 1 was the Officer in Charge of the initial pre-determined attendance of two appliances to the incident. On turning into Collingwood Avenue he noticed a plume of black smoke coming from the direction of the incident. He instructed both appliance crews, with the aid of personal radio, to prepare themselves for a 'working job'. Breathing Apparatus to be donned and available water supplies researched.

The appliance parked behind the Pump Emergency Tender. Station Officer 1 dismounted and ran down the alleyway of Mather Street towards the incident. He encountered a boundary wall some 1.5 metres high. He could see that a serious fire situation was involving the ground floor of the premises noting that two windows of that floor had been breached and black smoke with flames was issuing from them. He committed Fm 9 and 10 to get two firefighting jets to work into the windows. At this point he had been joined by Sub Officer 3 and being aware of the

nature of the contents of the premises he instructed Sub Officer 3 to send an assistance message to BHQ Control "make pumps six". The message was despatched at 1801 hours. Sub Officer 3 confirmed that the message had been sent.

Station Officer 1 then went to the front of the building on Talbot Road to continue his assessment of the overall situation. At Talbot Road he noticed that the ground floor windows were smoke stained but could detect no visible sign of fire. He continued his assessment round the entire perimeter of the affected building until he arrived again at the west side alleyway off Mather Street but on the building side of the perimeter wall. At this stage he recalls that flames as well as smoke were very obvious. He gave instructions for the boundary wall to be scaled and the firefighting jets re-positioned inside the boundary wall for better effect.

As a consequence of this initial assessment Station Officer 1 set plans in motion to effectively use his appliance, pump ladder A300 and the oncoming appliances. He gave instructions for all water supplies and firefighting jets in use at the west side to be supplied via the Pump Emergency Tender, and for pump ladder A300 to proceed on to Talbot Road at the east side, along with Leading Fireman 1 and Fm 3. Station Officer 1 then went to Talbot Road to decide on entry points at ground floor level. He is under the impression that whilst at the front of the premises he gained information LPG cylinders may be involved. He relayed this information to personnel.

At around this stage appliance A310, pump ladder Bispham arrived at the incident. He gave instructions for the appliance to be moved to the opposite side of the road from the building in case the windows blew due to the involvement of LPG cylinders.

Station Officer 1 recalls that appliances A310 Bispham and A370 South Shore had both just arrived at the incident and he briefed Sub Officer 1 and Sub Officer 2 the Officers in Charge of those appliances, of the situation. He told them of the fire at the rear South West corner of the building (alleyway site off Mather Street) and he instructed them to commit a crew from each appliance, wearing Breathing Apparatus, into the ground floor to penetrate the building and undertake firefighting duties. A310 Bispham to enter from the east main entrance of Talbot Road, A370 South Shore to enter from the west end of Talbot Road. No entry was to be made until satisfactory water supplies were available to each crew for the task.

NOTE 17

From incident tip-sheet and timer display of the police video this brief to Sub Officer 1 and Sub Officer 2 took place at approximately 1808 hours.

At this juncture Station Officer 1 was of the opinion that the measures he had taken and the actions implemented were successful inasmuch as he felt that the fire appeared to be coming under control. He did not envisage any water shortages.

The water supply into appliances A300, A310 and A370 came from different hydrants in three different directions and none of the charged lengths of hose appeared to him to be deficient of pressure.

Assistant Divisional Officer 1 then arrived at the incident and in the presence of Sub Officer 3 he briefed him of the situation. All information was exchanged and Assistant Divisional Officer 1 instructed Sub Officer 3 to send an informative message. Station Officer 1 was committed by Assistant Divisional Officer 1 to carry on undertaking incident assessment and appraisal by carrying out another circuit of the building.

NOTE 18

The informative message from Assistant Divisional Officer 1 was timed at 1812:08 hours.

As Station Officer 1 circuited the building he noticed a large double door on the south face. He decided that if entry could be gained through these doors then effectively the fire would be surrounded. He continued his circuit once again arriving inside the boundary wall at the site of the two firefighting jets manned and operated by Fm 9 and 10. His arrival at this site coincided with the arrival of appliance A361 from St Annes with Retained Sub Officer 5 Officer in Charge.

NOTE 19

According to information retrieved from the incident tip-sheet the time for this event would be approximately 1819 hours.

Station Officer 1 instructed Sub Officer 5 to take his appliance with two men wearing breathing apparatus to the rear of the building and make an entry at the double doors. He then went to Talbot Road via the east alleyway where Leading Fireman 1 and Fm 3 had made their entry. He leaned into the window and enquired as to their safety. At this stage he noticed that the smoke coming from the window they had entered was grey in colour. At Talbot Road Sub Officer 1 informed Station Officer 1 that his breathing apparatus team had made their entry and had been committed to the first floor via the internal staircase. Station Officer 1 felt that an alternate means of escape should be provided for men on the first floor if so needed. Along with Sub officer 3 and Fm 12 he slipped a 10.5m ladder from appliance 301 Blackpool and they pitched it to the single storey section of the building on Talbot Road West.

NOTE 20

Station Officer 1 sequence of events at this stage do not correspond to information furnished by Sub Officer 5 and Leading Fireman 4 both crew members of Appliance A361 which closed at the incident at 1819 hours. Their information clearly indicates that when they arrived at the incident they saw the 10.5m ladder already pitched to the indicated site. Furthermore the timer display on the Police

video shows the 10.5m ladder being pitched to the building at 1818 hours. It is, therefore, fair to assume that the information given to Station Officer 1 by Sub Officer 1 which led to the ladder being pitched took place sometime before 1818 hours. Leading Fireman 1 and Fm 3 were committed into the east alleyway side window at 1817 hours therefore when Station Officer 1 leaned into the window that Leading Fireman 1 and Fm 3 had entered it could only have been a matter of a few seconds after their entry.

Station Officer 1 recalls that he informed Sub Officer 1 that the ladder had been pitched and Sub Officer 1 relayed that information via personal radio to his breathing apparatus crew on the first floor, Fm Singleton and 1. Fm Singleton acknowledged receipt of the information to Sub Officer 1. Station Officer 1 returned to the 10.5m ladder climbed onto the flat single storey section of the roof with Assistant Divisional Officer 1. He felt the windows for heat and noted that there was very little heat transfer and all windows on this section of the building were intact.

After descending the ladder Station Officer 1 proceeded down the east side alleyway to the window that Leading Fireman 1 and Fm 3 had entered. He looked through the open window and recalls that he could see flames at the other side of the building (west). He noted that these flames appeared to be from floor to ceiling level in height. He turned his head to the left and saw a "ball of flame rolling at ceiling level across the building south to north". This ball of flame was crimson in colour and was contained in thick black smoke with a flame front approximately 1 metre in depth. Although he could not see Leading Fireman 1 and 3 he shouted for them to "get out". He ran to the front of the building, met Assistant Divisional Officer 1 and informed him of the situation. The decision was made to evacuate the building and he started blowing his evacuation whistle accompanied by all those in the vicinity.

Within a matter of seconds large volumes of black smoke issued from the building under pressure followed by "A phenomenon I have never encountered before in that the plumes of black smoke momentarily ceased, and it was as if the fire drew in as much air as it could before, seconds later, exhaling the products of combustion ferociously. The black smoke appeared to turn crimson immediately".

Station Officer 1 witnessed the exit from the building of two teams of two breathing apparatus wearers. Sub Officer 1 informed him that two men had failed to respond to the evacuation signal. He instructed Fm 7 and 6 plus two others to accompany him up the 10.5m ladder with a large axe and a charged line of hose, the intention being to break into windows on that face to enable exit or rescue for those personnel trapped on the first floor. The windows had been lined with substantial wood panelling supported by 75 x 50mm studding. At this stage Station Officer 2 shouted up to him from the Mather Street site that they had someone there badly burned. Conditions on the flat

roof quickly became untenable forcing the attempt to be aborted. Station Officer 1 recalls that at this stage the building at the east end of Talbot Road was an inferno and second by second the remainder of the premises became engulfed.

Station Officer 1 became involved in providing water protection for the adjacent premises exposed to the high levels of radiated heat. He left the fireground at approximately 2040 hours.

APPLIANCE A310, PUMP LADDER BISPHAM FIRE STATION

This appliance was mobilised to the incident at approximately 1802:27 hours as a response from the fireground message "make pumps six". The appliance mobilised to the incident and booked in attendance at approximately 1808 hours with the following crew

Sub Officer 1	Officer in Charge
Fm 4 4	Driver
Fm Singleton J	
Fm 1	

En-route to the incident as the appliance passed over Knowle Hill, Devonshire Road, Sub Officer 1 noticed a small amount of smoke coming from the direction of the incident. Fm 4 the driver, recalls that he noticed "the smoke on the skyline". While Fm 1 recalls an "enormous plume of black smoke".

NOTE 21

Sub Officer 1 and Fireman 4 worked close together during the incident and their action and activities were, to a great extent, inter-related. For that reason this report records their accounts and impressions before those of Fm 1

Fm 1 obviously plays a key role in events which took place at the incident, particularly those events which occurred on the first floor as he was the team member of Fm Singleton, who lost his life. To date Fm 1 has furnished information on three separate occasions.

- a) A statement given to the FBU whilst still in hospital.
- b) A narrative of events provided 18 May to the author and Divisional Officer 3 whilst still in hospital.
- c) A witness statement given to the police dated 10 July 1990.

Quite understandably there exists some element of disparity between these three accounts. In some areas Fm 1 has vivid recall while in others he is vague. For that reason the storyboard, when recording Fm 1 activities, refers mainly to information contained in the police witness statement. Areas of disparity, having relevance or bearing on the circumstances, are highlighted in note form.

Shortly before their arrival at the incident Sub Officer 1 heard a transmission over the appliance radio from Sub Officer 3 requesting oncoming appliances to switch to the personal radio facility. This he had already done and he asked Sub Officer 3, over the radio, where the appliance was to park. He received directions to site his appliance at the front of the building. As the appliance arrived at Talbot Road junction Devonshire Square Sub Officer 1 heard Sub Officer 3 instruct appliance A370 South Shore to take up a position on Talbot Road also. Sub Officer 1 saw appliance A370 South Shore at the opposite side of the junction. His

appliance was waved through first then followed by Appliance A370. Sub Officer 1 appliance closed at the incident at approximately 1808 hours with appliance A370 arriving at the incident at the same time.

As the appliance was driven along the length of the building Sub Officer 1 recalls that the incident appeared to be quite small with no visible flames at any of the front openings. He noted that there was a large volume of smoke inside causing 'sooting' to the windows. The smoke, he recalls, was light in colour and above head height. As the appliance pulled up outside the front of the building Station Officer 1 ran up to him and ordered the appliance to be moved as the windows could blow due to the 'involvement of cylinders'. The appliance was driven away by Fm 4 and parked at the east end of the building on the opposite side of the road and slightly to the rear of appliance A300, Blackpool.

Station Officer 1 briefed Sub Officer 1 as to the incident situation and instructed him to have his BA team make an entry into the building at the east ground floor entrance while the BA team from appliance A370 South Shore made a ground floor entry at the west entrance. He assisted Fm Singleton and 1 to run out the flaked lengths of 45mm hose from the appliance pump locker. Attached to the hose was an old type 'noble' branchpipe. As Fm Singleton and 1 made themselves ready to enter, Sub Officer 1 instructed the pump operator of appliance A300 to use his pump to feed Fm Singleton and 1 hose line and branch. A gentleman asked him if he needed a set of keys to make entry into the building. Keys were produced and the doors were unlocked. Sub Officer 1 asked the gentleman if he knew of the location of the LPG cylinders supposedly inside the premises. He received information that no LPG cylinders were on the premises. Sub Officer 1 informed Fm Singleton and 1 of this. By this time the hose was charged with water and Fm Singleton and 1 started up their breathing apparatus and went under air.

At this point Sub Officer 2 called Sub Officer 1 attention to signs of what he thought, was direct burning to two spots, a couple of feet apart approximately midway up the roof pitch and near to the middle of that elevation. Sub Officer 1 noted that some light coloured smoke was percolating through the roof tiles with signs of blackening to the tiles in that area. He then instructed his breathing apparatus team, Fm Singleton and 1 to make their way up the staircase to first floor level where he believed the fire to be. Before committing the team he provided them with a personal radio as the crew had not donned communications rigged sets.

During this sequence of events Fm 4 driver of the appliance dressed in fire gear then discussed the water supply situation with Fm 2 the pump operator of appliance A300. Fm 4 realised that more water may be needed and located a hydrant about 4 lengths of hose away east on Talbot Road. He fed a single line supply from the hydrant into the pump of appliance A310 Bispham. He recalls that although the hydrant pressure was not particularly good he felt that it would be ample to provide

one firefighting jet. He noted that the firefighting jet being used for Fm Singleton and 1 was supplied from appliance A300 Blackpool.

Fm Singleton and 1 had just entered the building, Sub Officer 1 instructed him to act as entry control officer of the team and to set up his breathing apparatus entry control board. Fm 4 could only locate Fm 1 BA tally. He could not find Fm Singleton's tally. It was agreed with Sub Officer 1 that Fm 4 should book up both team members as per Fm 1. He recorded this information on the entry control board.

NOTE 22

Fm Singleton's BA tally was later found on the appliance where Fm Singleton had placed it on dismantling.

While Fm 4 was setting up his entry control board Sub Officer 1 went to his appliance for the second personal radio to enable communications to be made with Fm Singleton and 1. Sub Officer 1 had accompanied the two man BA team to the base of the staircase approximately 3m into the building. As Fm Singleton and 1 went up the staircase Sub Officer 1 fed the 45mm hose line up to them. He recalls that at this point the smoke level was still quite light as he was able to stand upright by the staircase.

NOTE 23

Fm 4 cannot recall at what time Fireman Singleton and 1 made their entry however, information gained from the impounded BA entry control boards shows that Fm 4 logged the two wearers in at 1815 hrs. At the time that the author inspected the BA entry control boards the digital watch on the relevant board displayed some 32 minutes advance of correct time. The police video tape of the incident shows Fm 1 and Singleton at the entry point prior to 1811 hrs but not after that time. The camera returns to their entry point at 1813 hrs on the timer display but Fm 1 and Singleton appear to have passed through the entry point into the building.

The police video timer display is a more reliable basis for time assessment in this instance, therefore it is fair to say that Fm 1 and Singleton made their entry between 1811 hrs and 1813 hrs.

Fm Singleton contacted Sub Officer 1 by personal radio to inform him that they could not make good progress with the hose line on their own. Sub Officer 1 told him that he would get another team to assist. Leading Fireman 2 and Fm 5 were then committed at that entry point to assist Fm Singleton and 1. Sub Officer 1 informed Fm Singleton and 1 that another team had been sent in to assist. At this point Fm 4 was operating two entry control boards for the two teams who had made entry on Talbot road. Sub Officer 1 recalls that conditions had slightly deteriorated and Fm 4 position was consequently moved to the rear of appliance 310 Bispham where he

could maintain good overall visual control of the entry points.

At this stage Sub Officer 1 received a radio request from Fm Singleton and 1 asking for more pressure on their hose line. Sub Officer 1 asked the pump operator Fm 2 to increase the pressure. This was done.

NOTE 24

Fm 2 recalled that he was able to increase pressure to 5 bars.

Station Officer 1 passed information to Sub Officer 1 telling him that a 10.5m ladder had been pitched to the east end of the building to provide an alternate exit for personnel working on the first floor should they so need.

NOTE 25

Information from the timer device of the Police Video-tape shows the 10.5m ladder being pitched at 1818hrs. If the sequence of events portrayed by Sub Officer 1 are correct then all the foregoing actions had taken place by that time. This also shows that Fm Singleton and 1 had been inside the premises approximately 5 - 7 minutes. However, with regard to Sub Officer 1 recollection that conditions had slightly deteriorated and consequently Fm 4 position as BA entry control was moved to the rear of appliance A310, this activity must have taken place at a later stage as the Police Video tape clearly shows Fm 4 carrying out those duties at the entry point up until the time that the video tape finishes ie 1818 hours.

Sub Officer 1 relayed this information to Fm Singleton who acknowledged it. During this transmission Fm Singleton once again complained about the pressure on the hose and said that they kept losing pressure at certain points. Acting on this information it was agreed that the line of hose feeding the branch of Fm Singleton and 1 would be transferred to appliance A310 Bispham. This appliance had a supply of water coming into it from the hydrant that Fm 4 had earlier set into.

This transfer was co-ordinated by Sub Officer 1 who maintained radio contact with Fm Singleton throughout. The supply was re-instated to the hose line and Fm Singleton informed Sub Officer 1 that the pressure had improved.

Soon after this transmission Fm 1 informed Sub Officer 1 over the radio that they, Fm Singleton and 1 had located the fire, - "We've found it, its in the roof void". Sub Officer 1 informed Assistant Divisional Officer 1 and another team consisting of Fm 7 and Fm 6 were committed through the entry point to assist in manoeuvring and feeding the hose line for Fm Singleton and 1. As Sub Officer 1 was committing Fm 7 and 6 he was at the foot of the staircase leading to the first floor where he recalls forming the impression that the smoke level appeared to have lessened and he thought that the fire was going out.

NOTE 26

Sub Officer 1 is under the impression that Fm Singleton relayed the last message regarding finding the fire however, information from Fm 1 indicates that it was him, not Fm Singleton, who was at this stage using the radio.

The next transmission that Sub Officer 1 received from the breathing apparatus team of Fm Singleton and 1 was to the effect that 'they had lost water'. Sub Officer 1 was surprised at this and stood on the hose line which was still solid indicative of good pressure. Sub Officer 1 employed the use of hand signals to Fm 4 to increase pressure. He recalls that the pump operator Fm 4 dropped the water from his tank supply into the flow to improve the supply. Sub Officer 1 recalls that before he could transmit a message back to Fm Singleton and 1 to determine whether these measures were successful he noticed a large column of black smoke and saw Station Officer 1 at the corner of the building. He was shouting and appeared to be concerned.

NOTE 27

While the elements of Sub Officer 1 recall are generally corroborated by Fm 4 there exists some variance as to the event sequence at this stage. SubO 1 believes that the third team of breathing apparatus wearers, Fm 6 and 7 were committed to the entry point before he asked Fm 4 to try and improve water pressure. Fm 4 recalls that Sub Officer 1 asked for an increase in pressure before Fm 6 and 7 were committed. He notes that after being asked to increase pressure he introduced his tank supply into the hose line to augment supply. Then Fm 6 and 7 reported to him as entry control officer, handed in their BA tallies and then went into the building. Fm 4 logged the details of the two wearers on to his entry control board. At this juncture Leading Fireman 5 from appliance A360, pump ladder from St Annes station relieved Fm 4 of his duties as BA entry control officer - Fm 4 handed over to Leading Fireman 5

Sub Officer 1 now realised that there was a problem. He began transmitting to his BA team, Fm Singleton and 1 shouting for them to "get out". He himself "guesstimates" this time to be approximately 1825-1830 hrs.

Fm 4 recalls that shortly after handing over BA entry control duties to Leading Fireman 5 he became aware that Fm 6 and 7 were back outside the building where they had shortly before entered. They told him that conditions were such that it was too hot to stay inside. Fm 4 recalls that Sub Officer 1 asked them to go back inside to try and locate other BA teams. During this activity Fm 4 had noticed that the building was completely covered in dense black smoke which was issuing from every opening. He was with Sub Officer 1 when two men wearing BA came out of the building shortly followed by another two. He remembers that one of the latter looked like he was going to set fire with the extreme heat he had absorbed.

During these proceedings Sub Officer 1 had been using his radio to transmit to Fm Singleton and 1 shouting at them to "get out". Fm 4 had joined him just inside the doorway. They were both crouched down due to the intensity of the smoke and heat. Fm 4 was blowing his evacuation whistle and Sub Officer 1 remembers that as he stopped transmitting he heard what he thought was the BA team shout back at him over the radio but he was unable to understand what that transmission was, other than a "loud shouting". By now, he recalls, more whistles were blowing, he was aware of Sen. Div. Officer 1 and Fm 4 in the immediate area. He joined in with them blowing his own evacuation whistle. Fm 5 appeared at the entry point then went back inside for a few seconds. He re-emerged with Leading Fireman 2 whose tunic was smouldering so much that he had to be doused with a jet of water. Sub Officer 1 recalls that he transmitted to his team again telling them to get out and asking them where they were - again the response was a loud screaming.

NOTE 28

Information gained from personnel at or involved with the alleyway site off Mather Street suggests that Fm 1 had been rescued by or at the time that evacuation whistles were being sounded at that site. It appears that there was very little delay in time between evacuation whistles being sounded at Talbot road and at the Mather Street site - Sub Officer 4 Officer in Charge Appliance A320 Fleetwood, had reached the junction of Talbot road and the east side alleyway when evacuation whistles started to sound, he ran back round to the alleyway site off Mather Street and started blowing his whistle there. As he rounded the corner to that site he noticed Fm 1 at the foot of the ladder - Fm 14 the pump operator for appliance A370 South Shore, was standing at his pump when evacuation whistles began to sound - he 'instantly' ran the short distance to the alleyway site where he noted that whistles were already being sounded.

That being the case it would seem that Sub Officer 1 has placed events out of sequence and he possibly heard "screaming" at a slightly earlier stage, or he has misinterpreted the "screaming" perhaps for the Distress Signal Unit which had been activated by Fm 1 who had the radio at that time. Similarly he could have overheard shouting from other officers using radio at about that time. The matter has been discussed with Sub Officer 1 who accepts that he may have been mistaken with the sequence and confirms that the "screams" were so distorted that they could in fact, have been the noise of a Distress Signal Unit.

Fm 4 recalls that at this stage he realised the full extent of the fire situation, there was dense black smoke, high radiant heat and flames appearing everywhere. Both Sub Officer 1 and Fm 4 recognised that their colleagues Fm Singleton and 1, were in serious trouble. They ran to the nearby breathing apparatus servicing pool and each took a BA set and ran towards the alleyway site off Mather Street. On turning the corner into Mather Street they saw Fm 1 in obvious distress receiving treatment from ambulance men. After a few brief words

regarding Fm Singletons possible location they ran towards the boundary wall along the alleyway. They could see a ladder pitched towards a window opening engulfed in thick black smoke. Two firefighting jets were working into window openings on the first floor, Sub Officer 2 was in charge at this point and he told Sub Officer 1 and Fm 4 that several attempts had been made to enter the building to no avail.

Sub Officer 1 and Fm 4 started up their BA sets and "went under air". Sub Officer 1 climbed the ladder taking with him one of the firefighting jets for protection. He got halfway up the ladder but the heat was so intense and the smoke so thick that he could climb no further. Fm 4 led another attempt after closing down one of the jets to increase the performance of the one that he took with him. Again they were beaten back by the intensity of the heat coming from the building.

The situation was such that realisation came to both of them that any further attempt would be futile. At this stage all rescue attempts at this site ceased and crews were withdrawn, for safety reasons, to the other side of the boundary wall. Both Sub Officer 1 and Fm 4 went back round to Talbot road where they were re-deployed in general firefighting duties.

Fireman 1 recalls that on arrival at the incident the appliance was sited on Talbot road at the east side of the premises and on the opposite side of the road as a precautionary measure because Station Officer 1 had informed them that there may be LPG cylinders on the premises which could explode. Along with Fm Singleton he was instructed by Sub Officer 1 to 'go under air' and to take a charged line of hose via the ground floor to first floor level to locate and attack any fire in that area. Fm 1 recalls that a man offered to open up the premises with his keys. He remembers that after receiving their brief from Sub Officer 1 they had to wait a couple of minutes for the water supply to be ready. Once the hose was charged with water they entered the building. He noticed smoke at ground floor but recalls that visibility was quite good below the smoke layer which at that stage was down to about head height. He was aware that the temperature was slightly above the external temperature.

As they entered the building Fm Singleton was carrying the hand held portable radio, whilst he was at the front of the hose line holding the branchpipe. They climbed the two flights of stairs to the first floor level where Fm 1 noted that although the temperature was noticeably hotter it was still quite bearable. Again there was a smoke layer from ceiling level downwards with visibility reasonably good below the layer. They turned right and progressed along a northerly wall or as near to it as furniture would allow. They did not, at that stage, get far into the building as the hose line was becoming 'snagged on obstacles' Fm Singleton radioed to Sub Officer 1 for another team to assist with this problem. Fm 1 recalls that the request was acknowledged to the effect that assistance would be sent in to help. He put the branch on the floor and both he and Fm Singleton backtracked the hose straightening out 'kinks' as they went.

As they reached the head of the staircase area Fm 1 recalls that they met another team at the top of the stairs who had been sent in to assist. They explained to the new team (Leading Fireman 2 and Fm 5) that they were struggling to pull the hose into the building because of the obstacles in their path. Fm 1's impression is that Leading Fireman 2 and Fm 5 stayed in that area whilst he and Fm Singleton followed the hose line back to the branch where they had left it. During these operations Fm Singleton handed the radio over to Fm 1 while he freed some 'kinks' from the hose. Once they had regained their position at the head of the hose line Fm Singleton took over as 'branchman'.

Fm 1 recalls, at some stage, that the hose went soft although he is unable to recall at what stage of the proceedings this occurred. They carried on into the building, turning left to follow the configuration of a westerly running wall. Some distance along that wall they arrived at a broken window. The window appeared to be broken cleanly with little glass remaining in the frame. At this point Fm 1 and Singleton agreed that this window would, because of the distance they had penetrated into the building, provide a "potential escape point" rather than retracing their steps. Fm 1 recalls that at this stage conditions had not altered much from those they encountered when first entering.

Whilst at the window they both noticed flame in the ceiling above, about twelve metres away towards the centre of the building. Fm 1 transmitted a message to Sub Officer 1 that they had found the fire in "the false ceiling void". They made their way towards the fire and once in situ they attacked it with the jet. Fm 1 recalls that they were having some success against the fire. He noted that there was a smoke layer at ceiling level but was able to see flames through the smoke. He saw that the fire at this point was quite extensive with part of the false ceiling burnt away. Whilst fighting the fire at this site Fm 1 recalls that they suddenly lost all pressure on the hose, forcing them to withdraw from the fire. He sent a radio message to Sub Officer 1 to that effect and water pressure was soon restored. They advanced back towards the fire and started to attack it again.

Fm 1 notes that "very shortly afterwards there was an intense build up of heat, and we lost water to the branch". He cannot recall which event happened first. The increase in temperature was so acute that they "simultaneously decided to evacuate". He saw several articles of furniture burst into flame around them at floor level. Initially they started to backtrack along the hose towards their entry point and safety, but the hose had become so entangled with the furniture that it was impossible to follow. All the time the temperature was increasing, and, without being aware of discussing the situation, they decided to run towards the location of the broken window on the west wall that they had noticed earlier.

Fm 1 remembers that they held hands and ran towards that position, he remembers that he was screaming into the radio, albeit "probably incoherently", that they were in serious trouble

They ran, falling and stumbling over obstacles, holding on to, and helping each other along. During this passage Fm 1 can remember feeling pain from his burns, to him it seemed almost unbearable, so much so that he considered jumping from the window when they reached it together. At the window Fm 1 actuated his distress signal unit, this he did with some degree of difficulty because of the burns to his hands through his gloves. He looked out of the window and saw activity outside in obvious response to his distress signal. It was too hot to stand at the window so both of them dropped to the floor. There was no respite from the intensity of the heat despite taking up various positions to seek some relief.

At this point there was no coherent conversation between them. Fm 1 recalls that they were both screaming in pain and panic. Suddenly, and without any explanation, Fm Singleton went away from Fm 1 "walking south along the west wall". Fm 1 cannot understand why Fm Singleton took this action as both of them were aware that efforts were being made to assist them. - Fm 1 never saw Fm Singleton again.

Almost immediately Fm 1 became aware of a jet of water being played through the broken window. He stood up and leaned out of the window to get the cooling benefit of the jet of water. He recalls that a ladder was pitched below him so he climbed out of the window, hung by his hands and "dropped to the top of the ladder" where he was helped to the ground.

NOTE 29

Information contained in Fm 1 statement to the police does, in part, differ from information contained in two separate accounts that he furnished whilst still in hospital undergoing treatment. There is also some variance from the information supplied by other personnel who attended the incident. Fm 1 has, to say the least, experienced a very traumatic event. There is a possibility that the circumstances of that event, and the passage of time, may have influenced his recall of the incident in certain areas. For that reason, coupled to the fact that he played a key role in activities on the first floor, the areas of disparity are highlighted in this note.

At an interview on the 18 May, Fm 1 recalled that as they made their entry there was severe heat at ground floor level, the statement he provided to the police refers to the temperature at that point being just slightly above the external temperature. Information from other personnel supports the information that Fm 1 gave in his police statement, ie the temperature at that stage, as Fm 1 and Singleton made their entry at ground floor level, was just above the external temperature.

In his police statement Fm 1 recalls that because of the problems they experienced with the hose both Fm Singleton and himself went back to the head of the staircase after requesting help with the hose. Fm 1 recalls that they met another team at that point and, after relaying their needs to that team, he was under the impression that the

assisting team stayed in that area. The team in question were Leading Fireman 2 and Fm 5. Information from both of them indicates that they first met up with Fm 1 and Fm Singleton inside the first floor off the staircase area and, after feeding in hose to them they followed the hose line further into the building. Leading Fireman 2 reached Fm 1 and Singleton again and bights of hose were coiled ready for extension of the hose line further into the building. As they were pulling and feeding more hose into the first floor area Leading Fireman 2 recalls that he could hear Fm 1 and Singleton ahead of him.

In his police statement Fm 1 refers to the hose going soft at some stage. This would appear to be when Sub Officer 1 co-ordinated the supply change over of the hose from appliance A300 to appliance A310 Bispham. This change over was carried out using the radio to transmit the information to Fm 1 and Singleton inside the building. It is fair to assume that either Fm Singleton was operating the radio at that time, or, understandably, the full circumstances of the event have eluded Fm 1 recall.

Fm 1 recollection of the water supply to their hose line indicates that at various stages throughout their efforts on the first floor the water supply either failed or pressure decreased to the branch resulting in a poor fire-fighting jet. Information from sources including Leading Fireman 2, Fm 5, Sub Officer 1 and Fm 4 tends to support the premise that once the hose line was being fed from appliance A310 Bispham, the pressure supply seemed to satisfy. Sub Officer 1 recalls that he was surprised that shortly after he had received a transmission from Fm 1 and Singleton to the effect that they had located the fire, he received another message that water had been lost to their branch. He stepped on the hose line feeding the branch and found it to be solid. Leading Fireman 2 and Fm 5 both indicate that the pressure feed to the hose was maintained throughout their escape from the first floor. Both of them felt their way back along the hose to their entry point. Leading Fireman 2 recalls that he tried to tug on the hose line to warn Fm 1 and Singleton to get out, and he found the hose to be solid and taut and it would not yield. Fm 1 recalls that the hose had, at stages, become tangled and both he and Fm Singleton were involved in unravelling 'kinks' from the hose. He also recalls that as they tried to back track the hose to escape from the fire it was impossible to do so because the hose had become so entangled in the furniture. In an earlier statement made to the FBU he recalls that the hose was finely woven in and out of furniture.

Whilst not conclusive, the most likely explanation for the varying water situation at the branch end of the hose line appears to be that as Fm 1 and Singleton advanced into the area the hose line between themselves and the assisting team of Leading Fireman 2 and Fm 5 had become entangled and 'kinked' to the extent that it affected the

entangled and 'kinked' to the extent that it affected the branch supply.

Fm 1 and Fm Singleton had not used their personal BA lines to clip together. Furthermore none of the other teams who entered the premises had 'clipped together'.

During an interview on 18 May, Fm 1 recalled that before entering the building he and Fm Singleton had made a conscious decision not to 'clip together' as they were going to be pulling hose and because of the contents of the building.

What influence or bearing their decision had on the outcome of the incident can only be considered speculative and cannot be determined by the author. It is known from Fm 1 police statement that both men were suffering considerable pain and a degree of panic as together they reached the window from which Fm 1 escaped. Fm 1 comments that he could not understand why Fm Singleton left the window as both of them were aware that rescue attempts were in progress.

It is also known that Fm Singleton was aware that a 10.5m ladder had been pitched to the flat roof section at the west end of the building as an alternate escape route should it be needed. Also, earlier during Fm 1 and Singleton's efforts on the first floor, and before the situation deteriorated, attempts were made to force an entry to the first floor via the door at the head of the external fire escape. Fm 10 and 9 had been using a large axe in their attempts to break in and although Fm 1 did not hear the noise created by their efforts it is not inconceivable that Fm Singleton did.

Whether Fm Singleton left Fm 1 at the window as a result of panic and confusion induced by pain and the rapidly worsening situation, or, whether he had remembered that a ladder had been pitched earlier to afford an alternate escape route and he attempted to reach it, albeit, going the wrong way. Or whether he had heard the noise of the attempted break in at that floor level some 10 metres further along the wall in the direction he travelled when he left Fm 1. Or whether he left the site for some other reason will remain unanswered and a matter of conjecture.

APPLIANCE A370, PUMP LADDER SOUTH SHORE FIRE STATION

At approximately 1800 hours appliance A370 South Shore was mobilised to standby at Station A30 Blackpool as a normal 'moving-in' operation following the two appliances from Blackpool being mobilised to the incident at Talbot Showrooms.

En-route to Blackpool Fire Station the appliance was re-directed to attend the incident as a response to an assistance message "make pumps six" initiated at 1801 hrs by Station Officer 1

The appliance responded and closed at the incident at approximately 1808 hours with the followings crew:-

Sub Officer 2

Fireman 14

Leading Fireman 2

Fireman 5

Fireman 12

Officer in Charge

Driver/Pump Operator

NOTE 30

Information on the incident print-out indicates that appliance A370 was not in attendance until 1819 hrs. This information is obviously wrong. The Police video tape timer clearly shows the crew of the appliance undertaking hose running activities at 1808 hrs. Further information from the crew of A310 Bispham confirms that appliance A370 arrived at the incident at the same time as appliance A310 Bispham i.e. approximately 1808hrs.

On arrival at the incident Station Officer 1 gave instructions for the appliance to be sited outside 'Bond Street Fabrics' on the West side of Talbot Showrooms on Talbot road near the junction of Mather Street. Sub Officer 2 the officer in charge of the crew, was briefed by Station Officer 1 and instructed to commit a team wearing breathing apparatus with a firefighting jet at ground floor level west side of Talbot road. Sub Officer 2 was further instructed that on no account should the team be committed until adequate water supplies were available for the firefighting jet.

Sub Officer 2 recalls that whilst hose was being run out in preparation for a forced entry to the ground floor, he took the opportunity to step back to the other side of the road to assess the extent of fire and smoke spread. He noticed two areas of what he believed to be heat staining on the west side of the roof pitch, smoke was lazily percolating around and through the slates in that area. He further recalls that there was no indication of fire or smoke affecting the doors and windows on ground and first floor, he believed that all windows were intact. His brief to his breathing apparatus team of leading Fireman 2 and Fm 5 was influenced by his observations regarding the neat signs on the roof pitch. He committed Leading Fireman 2 and Fm 5 to search, locate and fight the seat of fire, which he believed to be on the first floor, after making ground floor entry.

Fireman 12 broke a glass panel in a door to afford access

and, as the nominated BA entry control officer he took Leading Fireman 2 and Fm 5 breathing apparatus tallies and entered their details on his entry control board. Leading Fireman 2 and Fm 5, made their entry taking with them a charged line of 70mm hose.

NOTE 31

The police video tape timer display clearly shows that Leading Fireman 2 and Fm 5 made their entry at 1812 hrs. Sub Officer 2 and Fm 12 are seen feeding the 70mm hose into the building as Leading Fireman 2 and Fm 5 make their entry.

Sub Officer 2 followed his team into the building penetrating only a "couple of metres". He was aware of smoke down to approximately one metre from the ground. The smoke was still, layered and dark grey in colour. Visibility below the smoke layer was fair and he could distinguish items of furniture.

As Leading Fireman 2 and Fm 5 made their way into the building they both recall that the temperature was comfortable and that once below the smoke layer their vision was good. They quickly made progress towards the South side of the building until they came across a wall running West to East. Leading Fireman 2 was satisfied that there was no fire on the ground floor over the distance that he could see. To his left was an opening and, crouched down, he could see clearly across the building to the east face windows. Both retraced their steps to the entry point and passed the information to Sub Officer 2. They re-entered taking with them a floodlight from appliance A370, and checked the entire area and being certain that there was no fire in that area they withdrew from the building via their entry point.

NOTE 32

Only at a much later stage when the fire had been virtually extinguished could Leading Fireman 2 see that the area they had penetrated was in fact bordered on all sides by internal walls. The wall to his left had a large opening which allowed him to see across the length of the building to the east face windows. - Their vision south, where the ground floor fire had shown itself at the alleyway off Mather Street, was totally blocked by an internal wall running west to east.

As they came out of the building they reported their findings to Assistant Divisional Officer 1 who briefed them regarding a re-entry to the building at the entry point where Fm Singleton and 1 had gone in to the building to the first floor. Both Leading Fireman 2 and Fm 5 were still 'under air' so they were committed through that entry point to assist Fm Singleton and 1 to advance. As they were about to enter, Sub Officer 1, who was near the entry control point, instructed them to help his BA team to advance further into the first floor as their hose was getting caught and restricting their progress.

NOTE 33

Information from the Police video tape timer display indicates that Leading Fireman 2 and Fm 5 were committed to this task at approximately 1818 hrs.

Leading Fireman 2 was the team leader and they climbed the staircase to the first floor hauling up hose as they made progress. When they reached the landing at the head of the staircase both Leading Fireman 2 and Fm 5 noted that the temperature was hotter but not excessive. Fm 5 recalls that the smoke was thick but as he crouched down he could see clearly for about five metres. As they followed the hose line to the right of the landing Fm 5 noted that through an open doorway on his right he could see light from a window approximately 10 metres away. They continued to follow the hose line manhandling more hose into the building as they went. They followed the hose along the passage of furniture through an opening in a wall where they reached Fm 1 and Singleton. Smoke conditions at this stage were "quite thick" and they had to reach the team of Fm 1 and Singleton before they could actually see them. Leading Fireman 2 asked how they were and what they wanted him and Fm 5 to do. They were asked to feed up hose to enable progress into the building. Leading Fireman 2 and Fm 5 both backtracked the hose to the stairwell, pulled and fed more hose into the building and hauled the hose back towards Fm 1 and Singleton. Leading Fireman 2 recalls that at this stage he felt that the temperature had risen but he put that down to working in those conditions, the smoke was black and thick, he could see his hand only if he held it up to his face mask. Along with Fm 5 they joined up again with Fm 1 and Singleton who had made more progress and had turned left racing the rear (south) of the building. Bights of hose that had been brought into the building were coiled to allow Fm 1 and Singleton to advance. It was during the stage of hauling along hose inside the first floor when Fm 5 noted that the hose deflated and water had stopped flowing. He formed the impression that the hose had been disconnected for additional lengths to be added outside or for a better water supply to be introduced.

NOTE 34

This deflation of the hose would coincide with the transfer of the hose line from appliance A300 to A310 which was coordinated by Sub Officer 1 by radio with Fm Singleton and explains why the hose line lost pressure and water supply at that point.

Fm 5 moved about five metres back along the hose line to see what had happened to it when the hose was re-charged to what he considered to be a good pressure. He estimates that the time taken between deflation and recharge of the hose to be a "brief period of approximately 5 seconds". He had, he recalls, made a conscious decision to maintain physical contact with the hose between his legs and in his hands at all times due to the smoke conditions and poor visibility. As a consequence of that decision Fm 5 maintains that apart from that brief 5 seconds deflation the hose was charged at all times while he was on the first floor.

Fm 5 was crouched down at the point where a few minutes earlier he had noticed the light from a window through an open doorway as he and Leading Fireman 2 made their entry on the first floor. This time he could not see the light. The smoke had become thicker and visibility had reduced to "zero". Leading Fireman 2 joined him. He had been to Fm 1 and Singleton again who told him that they still needed more hose to advance. They retraced their way back to the staircase where they encountered two more men feeding the hose-line into the building (Fm 7 and 6 from appliance A360 St Annes.) They hauled more hose into the first floor forming coils of hose on the floor ready for extension as they advanced. They had passed through an opening and turned left towards the south of the building following the hose line as they went. Leading Fireman 2 recalls that he could hear the sound of Fm 1 and Singleton ahead of him as they continued. The temperature, he noted, was hot but not excessive and visibility was "nil".

Without warning, the temperature rose rapidly. Within one or two seconds Leading Fireman 2 records that it became unbearable. He turned and shouted to Fm 5 "Get the f--- out of here". He turned back towards Fm 1 and Singleton shouting for them to get out, but there was no answer. He shouted again, this time pulling on the hose line, but there was still no answer - the hose line was still charged and it was taut and would not yield.

He recalls that he could feel his ears start to blister and the wax began to run from his ears. He could no longer stand up in the heat so he dropped to the floor and started to crawl along the hose back towards the staircase and safety. The situation now was totally untenable, there was no respite from the heat, he felt that it was all around him and getting hotter as he made his way out. During his escape the temperature rise was such that he believed that he was heading towards the fire. He stopped when he found a married coupling in the hose line and, by feeling the coupling configuration, identified which direction along the hose line to take and continued to follow it towards the staircase. He reached the staircase and ran down it, falling on the lower flight of stairs. Fm 5 was at the base of the stairs and they made their exit together.

Fm 5 recalls that without warning or any steady heat rise the temperature rose dramatically. He felt as though a 'furnace hot blanket' had hit him. He dropped to the floor to avoid the heat but found no relief. The temperature levels at his ankles, arms, knees and ears told him that it "was not survivable". He heard Leading Fireman 2 shout at him "Get the f--- out of here" and with the hose still held between his legs which, he noted, was still charged with water pressure, he crawled frantically to a wall. He could hear falling objects and a banging sound as if the ceiling was falling down. He remembers hitting the corner of the wall and following the wall to his left until he reached an opening on his right. During his escape he recalls that at all times he had the hose between his legs, running it through his hands and notes that at all times it was charged. He found the staircase and stumbled down the stairs. Visibility was still "zero" but, realising that he was almost out of the building to safety, the sense of panic and urgency left him slightly. He

emerged through his entry point and was met by Sub Officer 1 who asked him "where's your partner?". Realising that Leading Fireman 2 had not been with him at this point, he ran back into the building and started back up the stairs when he ran into Leading Fireman 2 who was making his descent. They both withdrew from the building. Leading Fireman 2 informed Sub Officer 1 at the entry point that Fm 1 and Singleton were still inside. Fm 5 recalls that once they were outside the building he noticed that Leading Fireman 2 tunic was 'smouldering' and he was touching his ears.

NOTE 35

Both Leading Fireman 2 and Fm 5 remember that the line of hose that they had helped to feed in to the building, and which they subsequently made their escape along, was at all times pressurised during and after the dramatic temperature rise which forced them to quickly exit the building.

They both recall that as they made their exit from the building they were aware of evacuation whistles being sounded.

Both Leading Fireman 2 and Fm 5 collected their BA tallies from the entry control officer, Leading Fireman 5 they took their sets off at the BA equipment pool and shortly afterwards were committed to firefighting duties along the Talbot road side of the premises. They went to their initial entry point at the west side of Talbot road and dragged out the hose line and branch they had originally entered the building with. They used this firefighting jet in the overall effort to bring the fire under control.

Sub Officer 2 the officer in charge of the appliance and crew from South Shore station, reported to Assistant Divisional Officer 1 that he had just committed Leading Fireman 2 and Fm 5 through a BA entry control point. He informed him of the brief that he had given to the team, and brought to his attention the heat staining and smoke percolation on the roof pitch. He informed Assistant Divisional Officer 1 that he felt that the fire was possibly at first floor level and threatened to spread to and break through the roof. Sub Officer 2 recalls that prior to passing this information to Assistant Divisional Officer 1 he had noticed that Sub Officer 1 was preparing an entry point for a breathing apparatus team further along Talbot Road. He remembers that he passed on all the relevant information to Sub Officer 1 regarding the roof pitch and possible fire seat at first floor level so that Sub Officer 1 could brief his team of the situation.

Sub Officer 2 was instructed by Assistant Divisional Officer 1 to investigate and take charge of the situation at the alleyway site off Mather Street. He ran to the site and noted that two firefighting jets were in use (Fm 9 and 10) through ground floor windows. He recalls that dark grey smoke was coming from both ground and first floor openings. The smoke was 'moderately heavy' but without flame. He noticed an external fire escape which, he felt, would provide an additional entry

point at that side on first floor level complimenting the entries made at the Talbot Road site. He ran back to Talbot Road, reported his findings to Assistant Divisional Officer 1 where it was agreed that Sub Officer 2 would initiate another entry point at the external fire escape whilst taking command at that site. Sub Officer 2 was accompanied back to the Mather Street site by Fm 12 who had handed over his BA entry control duties to Fm 4. Sub Officer 2 recalls that when he returned to the alleyway site off Mather Street the conditions in the building had not worsened, moreover, he felt that the fire had been brought under control and 'knocked'.

At this stage Leading Fireman 3 and Fm 11 from A32 Fleetwood station, arrived at the site and Sub Officer 2 instructed all four personnel, who were wearing breathing apparatus but not at this stage 'under air', to make an entry at first floor level via the external fire escape with a firefighting jet.

NOTE 36

The four personnel were Fm 9 and 10 who had been fighting the fire with two firefighting jets at that site from their arrival as part of the initial attending crew A301 from Blackpool fire station, and Leading Fireman 3 and Fm 11 who were part of the crew of appliance A320 Fleetwood which had arrived at the incident at approximately 1822 hrs - Fm 12 took over pump operating duties from Fm 8 who took a BA entry control board to the boundary wall and acted as entry control officer for the 4 man team.

The team began their attempt to force an entry into the first floor from the head of the external fire escape and during this attempt Sub Officer 2 heard what he describes as a "cry". This cry was quickly followed by the sound of a distress signal unit which lasted "for only a few seconds". Simultaneous to these noises a rapid change occurred within the building. The smoke changed in colour and consistency. Black smoke was forced out, under pressure, from all openings. As this was happening Sub Officer 2 recalls that he was aware that other personnel had arrived at the location but cannot recollect when. He turned to someone and gave him instructions to re-assemble the triple extension ladder and ordered it to be pitched to the left hand window at first floor level where he thought the noises had come from. He recalls that the window openings were obliterated from sight due to the density and amount of black smoke. The ladder had been quickly assembled and the team that had moments before been attempting to affect an entry to the first floor via the external fire escape were ready at the heel of the ladder to ascend it as it was being pitched towards the obliterated window opening. He ordered a jet to be directed towards the window opening in an attempt to alleviate conditions for those inside and in an effort to disperse the smoke. He recalls that Leading Fireman 3 ascended the ladder through the smoke only to come down again a few second later to re-adjust the heel of the ladder out from the building because the head had not been successfully pitched into the window opening.

NOTE 37

The ladder had been pitched 'blind' towards the window opening - Thick black smoke obliterated any view of that opening consequently the pitch was made towards the sound of the Distress Signal Unit and the estimated position of the window. The Distress Signal Unit had been reactivated and was now issuing a constant noise.

Sub O 2 notes that as Leading Fireman 3 climbed the ladder a second time he was deliberate in his actions. His upper body disappeared through the smoke and shortly after he remembers seeing a fireman "coming down the ladder somewhat awkwardly and, assisted by others, scrambled to the ground". Sub Officer 2 ordered a jet to be played on him to cool him down. His face mask was removed and it was only then that Sub Officer 2 recognised him to be Fm 1 from A31 Bispham. A resuscitator was provided by Fm 12 and Fm 1 told Sub Officer 2 that John, meaning Fm Singleton was still inside and to the right of the window - Fm 1 was, in Sub Officer 2 opinion, in a poor physical and mental condition.

Sub Officer 2 recalls that several further rescue attempts were made by Leading Fireman 3 Fm 11 Fm 10 and later by Sub Officer 1 and Fm 4 firefighting jets were used to provide water cover for the would be rescuers and in an effort to assist Fm Singleton inside the building but all to no avail. He recalls that at some stage during these proceedings Sub Officer 3 ran up the alleyway sounding his evacuation whistle and he also recalls contacting Station Officer 2 who came to the site and asked for an increase in water pressure as he felt that the firefighting jets were not operating at optimum pressure. All attempts at rescue quickly had to be abandoned, the heat was unbearable and flames rapidly began to appear at all openings. He estimates that within approximately one minute of ceasing rescue attempts the building was ablaze. Soon after this sequence of events Sub Officer 2 was instructed by Divisional Commander 1 to take charge of activities at the rear, south side of the premises.

Fireman 14 the driver/pump operator of the appliance recalls that on arrival he was instructed by Station Officer Salthouse to site the appliance outside Bond Street Fabrics on Talbot road close to the junction of Mather Street. A hose line and branch was run out from his pump for use by Leading Fireman 2 and Fm 5 to take into the building at ground floor (west) on Talbot road. He noted that all doors and windows were intact and that he could see smoke inside the building but "it was not thick".

He initially fed the firefighting jet from his appliance tank supply whilst he ran a feed into his pump from a hydrant at the junction of Foxdale avenue and Douglas avenue some three lengths of hose away (60m-70m). This feed initially was a single line of 70mm hose. The supply was not a particularly good one and he experienced some difficulty in maintaining a good firefighting jet for Leading Fireman 2 and Fm 5. Subsequently a second feed was provided for his pump and he was able to provide a second firefighting jet for operations at the alleyway site off

Mather Street. He recalls that sometime later the water pressure increased and he experienced no further problems with pumping operations.

Fm 14 further recalls that he was at his appliance as evacuation whistles began to sound on Talbot road. He instantly ran down the alleyway off Mather Street to warn that location and heard evacuation whistles being blown there.

NOTE 38

Fm 14 recall of the events concerning evacuation whistles show that with little or no delay evacuation whistles were being sounded at both Talbot road and the alleyway site off Mather Street. Furthermore Fireman 1 had already been rescued by this stage - Sub Officer 4 came to the location sounding his evacuation whistle and saw Fm 1 at the foot of the ladder. This serves to confirm a previous note (No 3) that evacuation whistles started to sound at approximately 1828:30 hrs.

APPLIANCE A360, PUMP LADDER, ST ANNES FIRE STATION

The appliance was mobilised to the incident as a consequence of a 'make pumps six' assistance message initiated by Station Officer 1. Although the incident information 'tip-sheet' shows the appliance as closing incident at approximately 1822 hours there was delay in transmission caused by radio traffic. It is known that the appliance arrived at the same time as appliance A361 from St Annes Station at approximately 1819 hours with the following crew.

Leading Fireman 5 Officer in Charge
Fm 15 Driver
Fm /
Fm 6
Fm 16

On arrival at the incident the Officer in Charge, Leading Fireman 5 reported to Assistant Divisional Officer 1 who instructed him to take over Breathing Apparatus Entry Control duties and to set up BA main control procedures. He started to initiate these measures and Fm 15 and 16 joined him at the east end of the building on Talbot Road on the opposite side of the road. Fm 15 and 16 were nominated as the emergency BA team and remained at the site. Meanwhile Assistant Divisional Officer 1 had instructed Fm 7 and 6 who were wearing breathing apparatus, to enter the building via the entry point initially used by Fm 1 and Singleton. He tasked them to assist in feeding the 45mm hose line into the building up the stairs and into the first floor.

As Fm 7 and 6 pulled and carried the hose up the stairs both of them recall that the temperature was bearable. Fm 7 recalls that they dragged as much hose as they could into the building and made their way upstairs to the first floor but he recalls that he could not see anything. Fm 6 notes that there was some visibility and recalls seeing light through what appeared to be a window at the head of the stairs. As they moved along the landing area at the head of the stairs he became aware that the 'window' was no longer visible and that the smoke had become black and dense. Within a matter of seconds he noted that the heat became "intense and unbearable" he heard Fm 7 shout at him to get out.

Fm 7 recalls that a few metres away from the head of the staircase and within a matter of 1 or 2 seconds, the heat became so "intense and fierce" that they "started to burn" and were forced to get out as quickly as possible. As they were descending the stairs Fm 7 recalls that it struck him as odd that it appeared to be getting hotter instead of cooler. At this point he heard screaming over his radio.

As they emerged from the entry point both Fm 7 and 6 recall hearing evacuation whistles sounding but both recall that they never heard the whistles whilst inside the building. They reported to the BA entry control where Sub Officer 1 ran over to them and told them to re-enter because firemen were

unaccounted for. They re-entered the building and started to go back up the stairs but were beaten back by the intense heat. Again they withdrew and reported to the BA entry control officer. Following this sequence of events they became involved in the attempt to gain entry at first floor level from the flat roof single storey section of the premises at the west end of the building. This attempt had to be aborted due to the intensity of the fire.

Fm 15 and Fm 16 who had been standing by as an 'emergency team' at the site of the BA main control heard the evacuation whistles start to sound and both joined in, sounding their own evacuation whistles. They both recall that Fm 7 and 6 emerged from the building at about the same time as the whistles were starting to be sounded.

APPLIANCE A361, RETAINED PUMP, ST ANNES FIRE STATION

This appliance was also mobilised to the incident as a consequence of an assistance message from the fireground. The appliance arrived at the incident at approximately 1819 hours with the following crew:

Sub Officer	5	Oic
Fireman	17	Driver
Leading Fireman	4	
Fireman	18	
Fireman	19	
Fireman	20	

En-route to the incident the officer in charge, Sub Officer 5 heard a radio transmission from Assistant Divisional Officer 1 a further assistance message 'make pumps ten'. This message was timed at approximately 1816 hours. On hearing this message Sub Officer 5 instructed the four crew members in the rear of the appliance to don their breathing apparatus in readiness for their arrival at the incident.

On arrival at the incident the appliance was initially sited on Talbot Road near Mather Street. Sub Officer 5 instructed the crew to remain at the appliance while he reported to the Officer in Charge for instructions. He noted that Assistant Divisional Officer 1 was on the flat roof single storey section at the west end of the building and he made his way towards the ladder which was pitched against the section when he was stopped by Sub Officer 3 who told him to take his appliance to the side of the premises at Mather Street. The appliance was moved to Mather Street and Sub Officer 5 accompanied by four of his crew went down the alleyway off Mather Street. At this location Sub Officer 5 noticed men at the head of the external fire escape trying to gain entry to the first floor. He noted that the fire appeared to be under control. On reaching the boundary wall he was met by Station Officer Salthouse who gave him instructions to take his appliance, driver and two breathing apparatus wearers to the rear, south side of the building. Fm 19 and 20 were left at the Mather Street alleyway site. The appliance and remaining crew proceeded to the rear of the building via Caledonian Avenue and Whittaker Avenue and parked in an alleyway leading to the south side of the premises. Their arrival at the south side of the premises coincided with the arrival of appliance A320 from Fleetwood which came to the rear of the building via an alleyway at the east side of the premises off Talbot Road.

Sub Officer 5 noticed that thick black smoke was pouring out from a pair of large timber sliding doors. He recalls that as he, along with the Officer in Charge of appliance A320 Sub Officer 4 were attempting to gain access through the sliding doors he heard "shouting" over his hand held radio. He moved away from the door area to make it easier to hear the transmissions and he heard, what he believed to be, a man screaming over the radio. Sub Officer 5 is under the impression that as he talked to the then unknown man, asking who and where he was, he heard him shout to the effect "get me out - get me out I'm on

"... followed by "where are you - where are you?". Sub Officer 5 estimates that the whole sequence lasted no more than 30 seconds when he heard the sound of a Distress Signal Unit over the radio drowning out any further transmissions. After further attempts to transmit to the unknown person he ran around the corner of the building where he learned that one man had got out of the building while another was still missing.

Leading Fireman 4 and Fm 18 were the two crew members of the appliance who were donned in breathing apparatus and after the appliance parked in the alleyway site at the rear of the premises accompanied Sub Officer 5 down the alleyway to the rear of the building. Both of them recall that as they arrived at the rear of the building with Sub Officer 5, appliance A320 from Fleetwood was already there, with a line of hose and a branch laid out from the appliance to the large sliding doors set in the south face of the building. They recall that a fireman was trying to break in through the sliding doors using a sledge hammer and crowbar. As they were helping with the attempt to gain entry they recall that Sub Officer 5 said that he could hear someone calling for help over the radio. Both Leading Fireman 4 and Fm 18 went under air and renewed their efforts to gain entry via the sliding doors. They had managed to make a hole in the door when they both heard what they describe as "a large bang" from inside the building and shortly after this evacuation whistles began sounding.

They continued their attack on the doors and as they managed to open them they noted that the inside of the building was well alight with flames rolling across the floor area. They both became involved with directing a firefighting jet in to that part of the premises and later setting up a ground monitor to protect property across the alleyway at the east side of the building.

Fm 20 and 19 the two other crew members from the appliance had been left at the alleyway site off Mather Street when Station Officer 1 had directed Sub Officer 5 to take his appliance and remaining crew to the rear of the building. At this time Fm 19 recalls that "there was not much sign of a fire and little smoke". He 'guesstimates' the time at this stage to be approximately 1821 hours. He noticed that men were about to make an entry to the first floor via the external fire escape and he, along with Fm 20 were instructed to go over the boundary wall to help those on the external fire escape. Fm 20 noticed that he could still see into the building but after a few seconds dark smoke started 'billowing' out of the windows. At this stage he heard "voices followed almost immediately by a Distress Signal Unit. He then heard someone shout to him to get a ladder up to the first floor. Fm 19 notes that shortly after scaling the boundary wall there was a lot of thick black smoke coming from the first floor windows. He 'guesstimates' the time to have been approximately 1823 hours when he heard the sound of a Distress Signal Unit from the first floor.

Working together Fm 20 and 19 quickly assembled the triple extension ladder which had been used to scale the boundary wall. As soon as it was assembled it was pitched towards the first floor window. The black smoke was so thick that they could

not see where the head of the ladder was being pitched to so the ladder was pitched 'blind'. They estimate that the whole operation from hearing the Distress Signal Unit and being instructed to get the ladder up to the first floor took no more than 30 seconds.

As the ladder was pitched the personnel who, shortly before were involved in trying to gain access to the first floor via the external fire escape, were climbing the ladder to attempt rescue. Both Fm 20 and 19 recall that they heard the sound of evacuation whistles. Whilst rescue attempts were being made they were instructed to climb back over the wall and 'drop' their breathing apparatus. This they did and estimate that this action took only about a minute and as they returned to the wall they saw Fm 1 being assisted over it. They helped him over the wall and between them they carried him down the alleyway to Mather Street. After this both of them became involved in general firefighting duties.

NOTE 39
Fm 20 and 19 'guesstimates' of time indicate that evacuation whistles were being sounded at approximately 1823 hours and one minute later Fm 1 was being passed over the boundary wall. Fm 19 indicates that within a further minute of helping Fm 1 along the alleyway to Mather Street he reported the fact to a Divisional Officer. The fact that the first 'Divisional Officer' to arrive was the Divisional Commander at approximately 1826 hours, and his estimate of evacuation whistles sounding is approximately two minutes after his arrival, approximately 1828 hours, places the 'guesstimates' of Fm 19 and 20 slightly awry. However, their information confirms that the ladder was assembled quickly and pitched quickly with the rescue attempts being made within a very short time of hearing the Distress Signal Unit of Fm 1 being actuated.

APPLIANCE A320, PUMP LADDER, FLEETWOOD FIRE STATION

The appliance and crew had been mobilised to stand by at Station A30 Blackpool as part of standard moving in procedures. As the appliance was in the vicinity of Blackpool Collegiate High School, Blackpool Road, the crew heard, over the radio, an assistance message from the incident 'make pumps ten'. The message was timed at approximately 1816 hours. The appliance was ordered on to the incident and arrived at approximately 1822 hours with the following crew.

Sub Officer	4	
Fm	21	Driver
Leading Fireman	3	
Fm	11	
Fm	22	

On arrival at the incident the appliance was sited at Talbot Road facing west at the junction of Whittaker Avenue. Crew members noted that there was little smoke, no visible flame and the incident appeared to be "nothing out of the ordinary".

Sub Officer 4 instructed the crew to remain at the appliance while he reported to the OIC incident. He reported to Assistant Divisional Officer 1 at the front of the premises who gave him instructions to take his breathing apparatus team, Leading Fireman 3 and Fm 11 around to the Mather Street side of the incident where they were to be committed to gain entry from an external fire escape to the first floor of the building. He ran back the short distance to his appliance and briefed Leading Fireman 3 and Fm 11 about their task. All three hurried down the east alleyway to the rear of the building and round to the Mather Street side where the external fire escape was located.

As they went down the east alleyway, past the site where Leading Fireman 1 and Fm 3 had made their entry into the ground floor, Leading Fireman 3 was heard to remark that the fire appeared to have been 'knocked' as there appeared to be little or no evident signs of a fire situation.

As they arrived at the foot of the external escape Sub Officer 4 recalls that Fm 9 and 10 were already there, both were wearing breathing apparatus but were not 'under air'. He further noted that the smoke coming from the windows at this side of the building was light grey in colour and only slight in quantity. He briefed Leading Fireman 3 and Fm 11 again, instructing them to assist in gaining access and entering the building with a firefighting jet. At this stage he saw Station Officer 1 who gave him instructions to make an entry at ground floor level at the rear of the premises via loading bay doors.

Sub Officer 4 then ran round to his appliance and instructed the driver, Fm 21 to drive the appliance down the east alleyway to the rear of the premises.

Fm 21 drove the appliance down the east alleyway off Talbot

Road along the route that Sub Officer 4 and Fm 11 had travelled just a couple of minutes previously. The appliance went down the alleyway past the window where Leading Fireman 1 and Fm 3 had entered but this time Sub Officer 4 noticed that flames had started to lick out of the window accompanied by a small amount of black smoke. Fm 21 also noticed the flame and smoke and described the flames as 'lazy'.

Once the appliance was at the loading bay Sub Officer 4 instructed Fm 22 the fifth member of the crew, to take a BA entry control board around the corner to the external fire escape to set up BA entry control procedures if necessary. At this stage Sub Officer 4 recalls that he was joined by Sub Officer 5 and two men wearing breathing apparatus but not 'under air'. This team was Sub Officer 5 with Leading Fireman 4 and Fm 18. Sub Officer 4 and Sub Officer 5 attempted to kick the door open with no success. Fm 22 returned to the loading bay area and informed Sub Officer 4 that BA controls had already been set up at the external fire escape site and therefore he wasn't needed. Sub Officer 4 instructed Fm 22 to find a water supply to feed the appliance, A320.

Sub Officer 4 recalls that at this point he was told that screaming or shouting had been heard over the radio. He ran back up the east alleyway to the junction of Talbot Road to find out what had happened. When he arrived at the junction he heard evacuation whistles sounding. He immediately ran back down the alleyway to the loading bay and round the corner to the external fire escape site. He was sounding his evacuation whistle to warn the crew he had shortly before committed to make the entry at that location.

As he rounded the corner he could see thick black smoke coming out of the windows under pressure. He saw that the door was still intact at the head of the escape staircase and realised that no one had entered the building there. He noticed the triple extension ladder pitched against the building further along that face and saw a man wearing breathing apparatus trying to enter what, he estimated to be, a first floor window. He could not see the head of the ladder for thick black smoke. He ran towards the ladder sounding his evacuation whistle to prevent personnel from entering the building. He recalls that he thought it strange that he was the only person in the area sounding his evacuation whistle when Sub Officer 2 informed him that somebody was trapped in the building.

Sub Officer 4 was aware that Fm 1 had just got out of the building as he arrived and Fm 1 was sat down at the foot of the ladder. He heard Sub Officer 2 tell someone to get Fm 1's face mask off. He also heard Fm 1's distress signal unit, the noise from which had been muffled by his crumpled tunic. He stayed in the area, assisting by footing the ladder while men wearing breathing apparatus made repeated attempts to climb the ladder to the first floor. He recalls that men were ascending into thick black smoke and intense heat in

their efforts to rescue the trapped fireman on the first floor. He remembers that at some stage later Sub Officer 1 and Fm 4 arrived and they too tried to get up the ladder for their crew member and colleague but all attempts were in vain.

Leading Fireman 3 and Fm 11 after being tasked to gain entry to the first floor via the external fire escape by Sub Officer 4 handed their BA tallies to Sub Officer 2 who passed them to the BA entry control officer. Leading Fireman 3 'guesstimates' this time to be no more than three minutes after arriving at the incident. Leading Fireman 3 noted that at this side of the building there were no flames and very little smoke, which he noted, was light grey in colour. He recalls that Fm 9 Fm 10 Fm 11 and himself all went 'under-air' in preparation for entering the first floor from the head of the external fire escape. Fm 9 and 10 were already on the fire escape, Fm 11 and himself were standing at the side assisting with a line of hose and a branch which was to be taken up the escape and used on the first floor. Fm 10 was using a large axe, attempting to break through the door at the head of the escape when the conditions suddenly changed, thick black smoke was being emitted from the building under pressure.

Within seconds they had returned to the foot of the fire escape when they were told by Sub Officer 2 that a Distress Signal Unit had been heard at a first floor window. Sub Officer 2 was shouting for the triple extension ladder to be re-assembled and pitched to the window area. Leading Fireman 3 recalls that by the time he had got to the window area, some 10 metres away, the ladder had been assembled and was being pitched towards the first floor window.

He picked up a line of hose with a branch, which was at the foot of the ladder, and directed the jet into the window area. By this time the window was completely obliterated by the thick black smoke. He used the firefighting jet until the ladder had been pitched, he estimates that it was for no more than 10-15 seconds. As soon as the ladder pitch was completed he climbed the ladder. He could hear the Distress Signal Unit sounding and it appeared to him to be very close and to his right hand side. He reached out and swept the area in front of him with his right arm and wondered why he could make no contact. It was "very hot and thick with smoke" at this point. He realised that the ladder had been pitched to the top of the window and quickly descended to the heel of the ladder, kicked the heel away from the building to allow, in his mind, the head of the ladder to fall into the window opening. Once again he climbed the ladder disappearing into the thick black smoke and intense heat. This time he came into contact with Fm 1 (he did not know who it was at the time). He assisted him onto the ladder and descended with Fm 1 following him down. At the foot of the ladder Fm 1 collapsed to his knees in obvious pain and distress. Leading Fireman 3 removed Fm 1 helmet and pulled him clear of the foot of the ladder.

Fm 11 recalls that Fm 1 told those around him that Fm Singleton was still in the building to the right of the window.

Acting on this information Fm 11 made an attempt to get into the first floor. He climbed the ladder while someone directed a firefighting jet on him to cool him down. He got about three quarters of the way up the ladder and, despite his efforts, he was driven back by the intensity of the heat and smoke.

Leading Fireman 3 made another attempt this time taking a charged line of hose with a branch to try to get to the window. He disappeared into the heat and smoke, but found manoeuvring the hose line and branch too difficult under the circumstances. He came part way down the ladder and passed the hose to someone on the ground shouting for the firefighting jet to be directed at him to give him a chance to reach the window. Once more his upper torso vanished into the smoke and ever increasing heat, but once more he was beaten back by the conditions. He returned to the foot of the ladder in an exhausted condition.

Fm 11 made another attempt as soon as Leading Fireman 3 got off the ladder, but this time the heat was so intense that he received blister burns to his ears for his efforts and he had to jump off the ladder part way down to avoid the heat barrier. Neither of them were in a fit enough condition to make any further attempt.

Sub Officer 2 who had been in charge of the attempt to gain entry to the first floor via the external fire escape and the subsequent rescue and rescue attempts recalls that after Fm 1 had been rescued and Leading Fireman 3 and Fm 11 had made their attempts to gain the upper floor he had urged them to "give it one last go". It was only after their final effort, and when he saw Leading Fireman 3 after he had removed his face mask, that he became fully aware of the punishment they had endured. He saw that Leading Fireman 3 was "obviously physically drained".

Whilst this activity had been taking place at the Mather Street (west) side of the premises the rest of the crew, Fm 21 and Fm 22 had become engaged at the rear of the building in firefighting duties. Fm 22 manned a firefighting jet at the east side of the alleyway to protect the adjacent property as the fire intensified. Eventually water supplies improved sufficiently to allow a ground monitor and a jet to be got to work from the appliance.

APPLIANCE A350, PUMP LADDER, LYTHAM FIRE STATION

This appliance and crew had been mobilised for standby duties at St Annes Fire Station as part of the standard 'moving-in' procedures when they were ordered on to the incident by BHQ control as a result of an assistance message from the fireground to 'make pumps ten'. The appliance responded and closed at the incident at approximately 1829 hours with the following crew.

Sub Officer 6	Officer in Charge
Fm 23	Driver
Fm 24	
Fm 25	
Fm 26	
Fm 27	

As the appliance was en-route to St Annes Fire Station Sub Officer 6 heard the radio message requesting assistance. When the appliance and crew were instructed to proceed to the incident he told the four crew members in the rear cab to don breathing apparatus. This was done and Fm 27 had the set with BA communications equipment. A transmission check was made and the radio equipment left switched on. Whilst the appliance was proceeding along Talbot Road crew members could see a "thick black ball of smoke" and before the appliance arrived at the incident Sub Officer 6 recalls that he heard, over the hand held radios, "a lot of shouting and possible screaming, then this was blotted out by the sound of evacuation whistles".

Fm 23 recalls that whilst proceeding along Talbot Road he heard, over the radio, the sound of evacuation whistles and a startling noise that, with hindsight, he assumed was a scream.

Fm 24 also remembers that shortly before arriving at the incident evacuation whistles and shouting could be heard over the personal radio.

Fm 27 recalls that when they arrived he could hear the sound of evacuation whistles and shouts over the radio. Similarly Fm 26 recalls hearing evacuation whistles over the radio.

The information furnished by the crew is significant inasmuch as it helps to determine the time for evacuation whistles to have been initiated. The incident information 'tip-sheet' shows that the appliance closed at 1829:11 hours. The crew heard the whistles 'shortly' before arriving at the incident which serves to confirm the estimated time contained in note 3.

The shouting and/or screaming heard by the crew could have been from Fm 1 or possibly they heard Sub Officer 1 shouting to Fm 1 and Singleton to get out of the building, while Fm 4 was at his side sounding his evacuation whistle.

Assistant Divisional Officer 1 responded to the incident on receipt of the 'make pumps six' assistance message from the fireground. He parked his car at the corner of Foxdale Avenue adjacent to the Queens Hotel, directly opposite Talbot Showrooms at approximately 1809 hours.

As he got out of his car he noticed a pall of grey coloured smoke coming from the rear west side of the building. As he was getting changed into fire gear he observed that there was little or no signs of fire on the Talbot Road face of the premises, only wisps of 'greyish smoke' were coming out of one or two ground floor openings. He noted that three appliances were positioned at the front of the building, two on the east side (A300, A310) and one on the west side (A370). Sub Officer 2 reported to him and passed all information to him, at the same time, he pointed out the smoke percolating from the pitch of the roof at the Talbot Road elevation telling Assistant Divisional Officer 1 that he considered that fire was at first floor level. Assistant Divisional Officer 1 recalls that he gained the impression that the windows at first floor level were smoke discoloured.

Assistant Divisional Officer 1 noticed Sub Officer 1 with a personal radio at an entrance further along Talbot Road to the east. Station Officer 1 and Sub Officer 3 then reported to him and exchanged all information regarding their findings and actions to date. This information included the fact that two firefighting jets were in use at the Mather Street side of the building tackling a fire at ground floor level, one firefighting jet had been got ready for use at the east alleyway side of the building and two firefighting jets had been committed into the building at two separate entrances on Talbot Road.

Assistant Divisional Officer 1 instructed Station Officer 1 to carry out further assessment and appraisal of the situation at the rear and west side of the building and then report his findings back to him. He then gave instructions to Sub Officer 3 to send an informative message back to BHQ Control and also a request for the Turntable ladder to attend the incident.

NOTE 40

This message was timed at 1812 hours.

Leading Fireman 1 then reported to Assistant Divisional Officer 1 informing him that he had gained information indicating that there was no hazard from LPG cylinders. He also informed Assistant Divisional Officer 1 that the Gas and Electric supplies for the premises had been isolated.

At about this stage Assistant Divisional Officer 1 recalls that he received a situation update from Sub Officer 1 regarding the breathing apparatus team of Fm 1 and Singleton. Included in the update was the request for assistance to feed hose up on the first floor.

This update coincided with the appearance from their entry point of Leading Fireman 2 and Fm 5 who had emerged to say that they could find no fire in that area. Assistant Divisional Officer 1 instructed them to report to Sub Officer 1 briefing them regarding the task they were to undertake to assist the breathing apparatus team on the first floor by feeding the hose line into them. He then instructed Sub Officer 2 to take charge of activities at the Mather Street side of the premises, while he carried out an assessment of the east alleyway side of the building off Talbot Road. At that location he recalls that he instructed Leading Fireman 1 and Fm 3 to make an entry at a window where "grey smoke" was pouring out. Both Leading Fireman 1 and Fm 3 were wearing breathing apparatus and had already run out a line of 70mm hose to that site. He instructed them to locate and fight the fire and report their findings back to him. As he returned to the Talbot Road face of the building he asked Sub Officer 1 for an update of the progress being made by his breathing apparatus team of Fm 1 and Singleton. Sub Officer 1 informed him that they had not yet located the fire.

Assistant Divisional Officer 1 recalls that his assessment of the situation at that juncture was that the building appeared to be moderately smoke logged with smoke 'lightish grey' in colour but no fire to be seen. Although he was satisfied that the measures taken so far were proving successful he decided to request more assistance at the incident. He instructed Sub Officer 3 to send back a message to BHQ 'Make pumps ten for BA'. At the same time he instructed Sub Officer 3 to undertake responsibility for ensuring that adequate water supplies were maintained for the fireground.

NOTE 41

There is slight variance regarding the instruction to Sub Officer 3 to take charge of the water supplies inasmuch as Assistant Divisional Officer 1 is under the impression that he gave the instruction to him before sending an assistance message while Sub Officer 3 believes that it was after he sent the message and then reported back to Assistant Divisional Officer 1 to inform him that the message had been sent. The message was timed at approximately 1816 hours.

Whilst Assistant Divisional Officer 1 appears to have good recall of events he seems to have confused the sequence of those events. He is under the impression that he committed Leading Fireman 2 and Fm 5 to assist in feeding the hose line to the first floor before he sent the assistance message at approximately 1816 hours. Video tape information clearly shows that Leading Fireman 2 and Fm 5 were not committed to that task until approximately 1818 hours.

At this stage Assistant Divisional Officer 1 was aware that the following actions had been initiated;

- 1) Two firefighting jets were in use at the Mather Street side of the building.

- 2) A team wearing breathing apparatus had entered and searched the ground floor west side of the building but were sure no fire was in that location. (This was Leading Fireman 2 and Fm 5 initial entry task at the Talbot Road west entrance).
- 3) A team wearing breathing apparatus with a firefighting jet had been committed to the building at the east alleyway site (Leading Fireman 1 and Fm 3).
- 4) A team wearing breathing apparatus with a firefighting jet were on the first floor trying to locate a seat of fire in that area (Fm 1 and Singleton). This team were being supported by a further team wearing breathing apparatus (Leading Fireman 2 and Fm 5).
- 5) Station Officer 1 was carrying out a further assessment and appraisal of the situation to the side and rear of the premises.
- 6) Sub Officer 2 had been instructed to take charge of the activities at the Mather Street alleyway site.
- 7) Sub Officer 3 had been tasked to take charge of the water supply for the fireground.

At about this stage, Assistant Divisional Officer 1 recalls that Station Officer 1 came round the front of the building and shouted to him that he was going to pitch a ladder to the flat roof extension at the west end of the building as an alternate exit for personnel on the first floor. This information was given to Sub Officer 1 for him to relay, via radio, the same to the breathing apparatus wearers on the first floor.

When the ladder was in position Assistant Divisional Officer 1 went up on the flat roof extension with Station Officer 1 where, again, all information regarding the incident was exchanged. He remembers that he felt the windows on that side of the building at first floor level and noted that they were 'warm'. He was aware of the possible need for ventilation but deferred the decision to 'open up' at that stage until he was satisfied that adequate covering jets were in position. As he looked towards the rear of the building he noticed two firemen wearing breathing apparatus, but not 'under air', directing a firefighting jet into the ground floor windows. The pall of smoke which he had noticed on his arrival had now been reduced to a small amount of light grey smoke. He gave instructions for the men to 'get under air' and get into the first floor with the firefighting jet via the external fire escape some 10 metres further south along the building. He left this task to the supervision of Sub Officer 2.

NOTE 42

An element of disparity exists between Assistant Divisional Officer 1 recollections and Sub Officer 2 recollections regarding the decision to make an entry to the first floor via the external fire escape. Sub Officer 2 is under the impression that after being instructed

to take charge of the situation at that location he noticed the external fire escape and, forming the impression that it would provide an additional entry point, he ran back round to the front of the building to Assistant Divisional Officer 1 where, it was decided, that the plan should be put in to operation under the supervision of Sub Officer 2

Assistant Divisional Officer 1 is under the impression that he noticed the external fire escape while he was on the flat roof and from that point he initiated measures for gaining access to the first floor and left the activity under the supervision of Sub Officer 2 Fm 9 and Fm 10 's recollections tend to support the fact that Assistant Divisional Officer 1 initially instructed them to gain access to the first floor via the external escape.

Shortly after this Assistant Divisional Officer 1 climbed down the ladder from the flat roof and he recalls that he went to Sub Officer 1 and asked him again for a progress update of his BA team on the first floor. Sub Officer 1 informed Assistant Divisional Officer 1 that they had found fire in the roof void and were 'fighting it'. Assistant Divisional Officer 1 told Sub Officer 1 that he would get another team to support and assist with feeding the hose into the first floor. He then told Fm 4 who was acting as the BA entry control officer to send the next officer who arrived so that he could nominate him to set up BA main control procedures. As he was giving this instruction to Fm 4 Assistant Divisional Officer 1 recalls that two firemen, wearing breathing apparatus, from St Annes Station arrived (Fm 7 and 6). He instructed them to 'get under air' and report to Sub Officer 1 who would brief them as to their task on entry. The officer in charge of the newly arrived appliance was Leading Fireman 5 and Assistant Divisional Officer 1 tasked him to take over BA main control duties.

Assistant Divisional Officer 1 recalls that at some stage after this sequence of events, he saw Station Officer 1 appear from the east alleyway off Talbot Road. He was shouting something like 'we'd better get them out'. He quickly looked up and could see that the smoke had changed from light grey to large volumes of thick black smoke - the transformation had literally taken only seconds.

He immediately started to blow his evacuation whistle. Whilst running towards the building, he recollects that other personnel around him started to sound their evacuation whistles - he vaguely recalls that Sub Officer 1 informed him that BA wearers inside the building were not responding to the whistles. He recalls that at that moment the Divisional Commander arrived, he quickly told him what had happened and he was told to remain at the front while the Divisional Commander went towards Mather Street. Assistant Divisional Officer 3 recalls seeing Fm 7 Leading Fireman 1 and Leading Fireman 2 make their exit from the building. He became aware that two men had not come out and were still unaccounted for. Every window on that face of the building was now issuing thick black smoke and he recalls being told that Fm 1 had been rescued from a

window suffering from burns but Fm Singleton was still missing.

Assistant Divisional Officer 1 stayed at the front of the building as the fire quickly took hold of the ground floor then the first floor. He stayed in charge of operations at the front until Divisional Officer 1 arrived.

DIVISIONAL COMMANDER, SDO 1

The Divisional Commander proceeded to the incident on receipt of the assistance message from the fireground 'make pumps ten for BA'. En-route to the incident he noticed a 'greyish plume of smoke' rising from what he assumed to be Talbot Showrooms. As he drove along Talbot Road he pressed his radio 'status update' and closed at the incident at approximately 1826:29 hours. At this point, he recalls, there appeared to be little indication of the incident on Talbot Road with only a small amount of smoke coming from that location. He further recalls that the greyish smoke he had observed en-route appeared to be coming from the rear of the premises.

On approaching the incident he had observed Assistant Divisional Officer 1 and Station Officer 1 at the front of the premises. He looked for them again as he was getting changed into his fire gear. Assistant Divisional Officer 1 was still at the front of the building engaged in conversation with three or four firefighters. As the Divisional Commander made his way across the road towards Assistant Divisional Officer 1 he became aware of a flurry of activity. The group of firefighters dispersed towards different points of the building sounding their evacuation whistles. He ran to the nearest entrance to the building blowing his own evacuation whistle. Crawling into the building whilst still blowing his whistle he noted that conditions had rapidly deteriorated - the smoke layer in that part of the building was within half a metre of floor level. The billowing, black smoke was, he noticed, now being drawn back inside the building from around him.

After what seemed to him at the time, to be about two or three minutes, he recalls that he was joined by either Fm 4 or Sub Officer 1 who told him that three men had failed to respond to the evacuation whistle. He issued instructions to commit the emergency BA team to search for and assist the men to evacuate. He also recalls initiating a message to the effect that personnel had failed to respond to the evacuation signal.

He then recalls that Assistant Divisional Officer 1 gave him information to the effect that two men were still missing. He became aware of two men emerging from the building and initially thought that these were the two missing men, only to be informed that they were the emergency team who had been forced back out of the building after only having managed to gain a position half way up the staircase. He remembers that he issued instructions for a roll-call to be taken to determine precisely who, if anyone, was still missing. At this stage he received information to the effect that one person had been rescued from the Mather Street side of the building. He quickly made his way to that location and there he saw Fm 1 being attended by an ambulance. After a few brief words with Fm 1 he ran down the alleyway off Mather Street towards the building on fire, where he witnessed the latter stage of the rescue attempts. He recalls that at this stage he felt that the quality of the firefighting jets at this site was poor and he gave instructions for the pressure to be increased. He recalls that the smoke was so thick that it was impossible to see the head of the ladder and the

upper torso of the would be rescuer on the ladder was enveloped in smoke. He then made his way around the corner to the rear of the building and saw, through the now open sliding doors at the loading bay, a serious fire situation with a 'mass of flames'. He quickly returned to the alleyway site off Mather Street and noticed that flames were now across the first and ground floor. He ordered the rescue attempts to be aborted.

He realised that water supplies were now failing to keep pace with demands, and consequently sent an assistance message 'make pumps fifteen' at approximately 1840 hours. He then gave instructions to Station Officer 2 to take over responsibility for providing and maintaining the water supplies to the fireground. His efforts from that time were directed in the main to protecting the surrounding premises from the intense radiated heat and threat of spread by direct burning. He remained the officer in charge of the incident until the arrival of the Deputy Chief Fire Officer.

SUMMARY

At its height the incident warranted the attendance of 20 pumping appliances with special and support appliances. The 'stop' message, indicating the time that the fire had been brought under control, was initiated at approximately 1952 hours by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer. A total of 8 firefighting jets, 1 Turntable Ladder monitor (intermittently) and 1 ground monitor were used to fight the fire and effectively protect the adjacent properties, which as the blaze heightened, were considered to be at real risk from high radiated heat, flying brands and direct impingement of flame.

The storyboard deals only with those appliances, crews and officers relative to the events and circumstances leading up to the realisation that Fm John Singleton had become a victim of the fire. As stated at the outset, it has proved sometimes difficult to gather a precise and detailed picture of the activities and the proper sequence in which they must have occurred. In all probability more was done than has been recounted. Officers have vague recollections of telling personnel to carry out this and that task but cannot remember to whom they gave the order or when. Personnel were aware of others around them but cannot recall totally who they were or what activity they were engaged in.

Between 1820 hours and the actual time that the fire rapidly developed to the stage where personnel inside the building found themselves in a life threatening situation, all indications were that the fire had been successfully attacked and had been brought under control. The fire investigation report reveals that the fire is thought to have spread undetected beneath the first floor in the ground floor false ceiling. Construction materials and defects in the timber floor would have assisted transmission of smoke, heat and eventually fire to the first floor.

The fire broke out of the false ceiling at ground floor towards the rear and manifested itself as a rolling flame front across the width of the building, as witnessed by Leading Fireman 1 and Fm 3 who were inside the ground floor tackling 'two pockets of fire'. Coinciding with this situation, it is thought that fire finally broke through to the upper floor and initially appeared at ceiling level there.

The tactics employed by the initial attending appliances seem to be based on sound judgement, the visible fire was immediately attacked at the alleyway site off Mather Street. Two firefighting jets were got to work there while entries at two separate locations on the front face of the building were organised and, teams wearing breathing apparatus were committed to search, locate and attack the fire. A further attack was made from the east side of the building and matters were in hand to enter from the rear of the premises at the loading bay area. Similarly, attempts were in progress to enter the first floor via the external fire escape, but were aborted due to the rapid development of the fire and the need for rescue and rescue attempts to be made at the first floor window. Provision had been made for


afield to set into previously untapped, larger mains, to relay water to the fireground. Pressure supplies were increased to the area by the Water Authority at approximately 1900 hours as a response to an earlier request from the fireground.

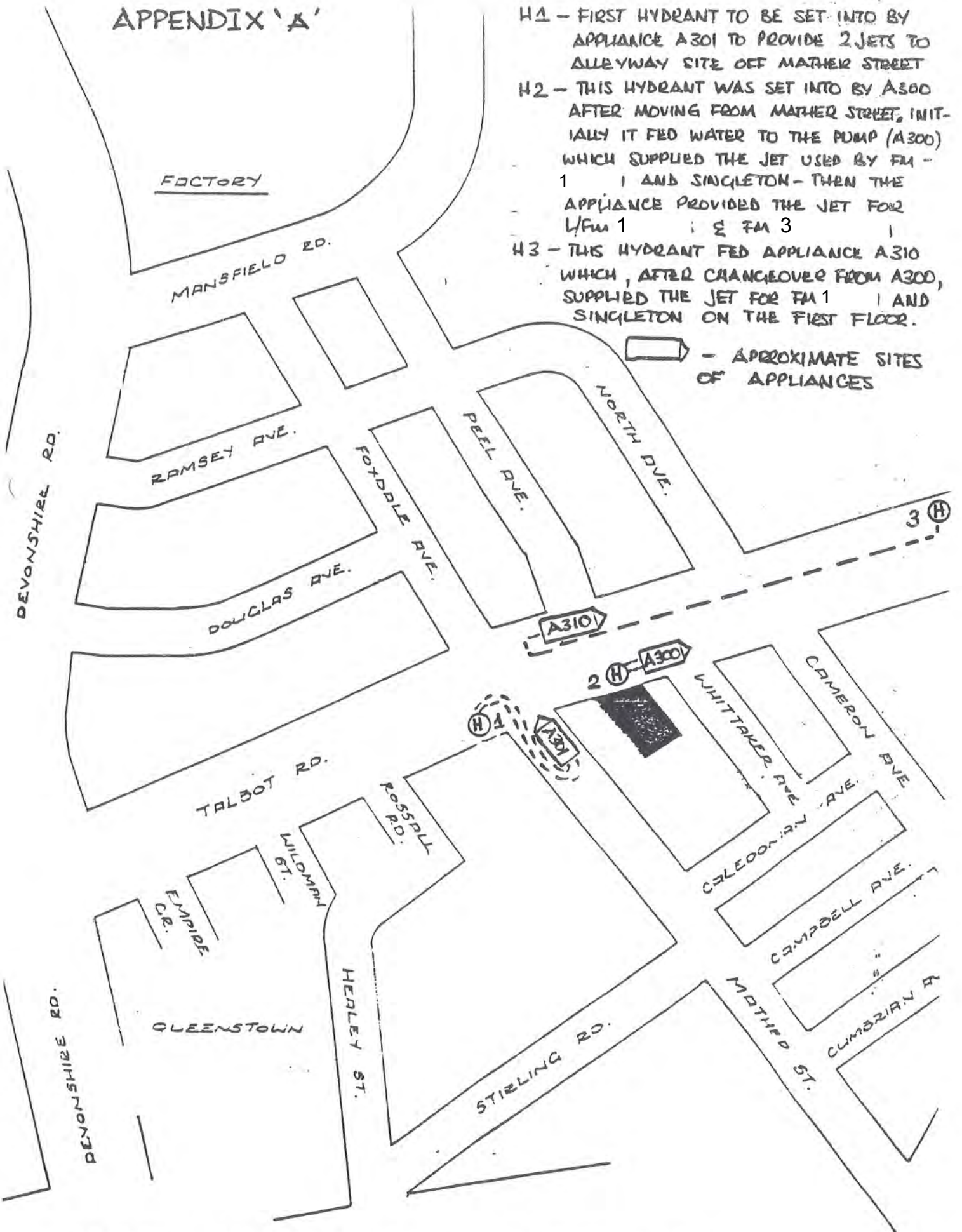
The rescue and rescue attempts at the alleyway site off Mather Street were well orchestrated and carried out with determination and alacrity, from the instant that personnel became aware of the plight of those caught by the fire situation on the first floor.

Leading Fireman 3 and Fm 11 made repeated and determined efforts to reach the first floor to assist their colleague Fm Singleton. Despite the extreme conditions every effort was made by both of them in their desperate bid to reach him. The severely punishing conditions did not deter them and, with scant regard for their own safety, they pursued the task until they were both exhausted and the fire situation quickly ended any realistic hope of Fm Singleton's survival.

APPENDIX 'A'

- H1 - FIRST HYDRANT TO BE SET INTO BY APPLIANCE A301 TO PROVIDE 2 JETS TO ALLEYWAY SITE OFF MATHER STREET
- H2 - THIS HYDRANT WAS SET INTO BY A300 AFTER MOVING FROM MATHER STREET, INITIALLY IT FED WATER TO THE PUMP (A300) WHICH SUPPLIED THE JET USED BY FM 1 AND SINGLETON - THEN THE APPLIANCE PROVIDED THE JET FOR FM 1 & FM 3
- H3 - THIS HYDRANT FED APPLIANCE A310 WHICH, AFTER CHANGEOVER FROM A300, SUPPLIED THE JET FOR FM 1 AND SINGLETON ON THE FIRST FLOOR.

 - APPROXIMATE SITES OF APPLIANCES



TALBOT SHOWROOMS
440 TALBOT RD
BLACKPOOL

T.O.C. 5:58
5/5/90

