

A IN THE CROWN COURT
AT GUILDFORD

No: T20090070

Bedford Road
Guildford

Wednesday 13th October 2010

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Before:

HIS HONOUR JUDGE N.A. STEWART

REGINA

-v-

SEEMA MISRA

(Transcribed from tape by Marten Walsh Cherer Ltd,
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Official Court Reporters)

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MR W. TATFORD appeared on behalf of the PROSECUTION

MR K. HADRILL appeared on behalf of the DEFENCE

PROCEEDINGS ON WEDNESDAY 13th OCTOBER 2010
(DAY 3)

Wednesday 13th October 2010

A

JUDGE STEWART: Yes, Mr Tatford?

MR TATFORD: Your Honour, I am going to read a statement now.

B

JUDGE STEWART: It is not always necessary for a witness to attend in person at a trial.

The next witness has made a written statement. The prosecution and defence have both had a chance to look at it and consider it. Nobody wants to challenge or dispute what it says.

C

Nobody wants to ask the witness anything beyond what is in the statement and so it is

obviously a saving in terms of time and expense and inconvenience not to bring the person here but simply to read the statement. The effect is that what you hear becomes evidence in the trial just as if it had been given in person.

D

MR TATFORD: Thank you, your Honour. The statement is of Elaine Ridge, page 4 in your Honour's bundle. Members of the jury, the witness's name is Elaine Ridge. Her statement is dated 9th January 2009. At the top of the statement there is a declaration as to the truth of its contents. This appears at the top of all witness statements. I will read it out once because it is a bit of a mouthful but any other statements that are read out have a similar declaration at the top.

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It says this: "I have been employed by Post Office Ltd for over 28 years. Since January 1980 I have performed the role of contracts manager and was appointed to the position of agents' contract manager in September 2006. My duty involves the appointment of new sub-postmasters and any ongoing contractual issues that arise thereafter. Due to the nature of the work I do I am a location independent worker and move between locations to do various types of interviews depending on the location of the branch and the person being interviewed."

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A “One of the post offices that I remember seeing is West Byfleet sub-post office
branch, 17(a), Station Approach, West Byfleet which has a financial accounting division
code of 126#023. Mrs Seema Misra was appointed on 30th June 2005 as the sub-postmaster
B at West Byfleet post office until her suspension on 14th January 2008. Sub-postmasters are
not employees of Post Office Ltd but operate under a contract to provide services on behalf
of Post Office Ltd. Sub-postmasters usually locate the actual post office in premises in
C which they also run a private business. Under the terms of the contract sub-postmasters have
sole responsibility for all stock and cash and for all daily, weekly and monthly accounting
and administration in respect of the post office.”

D “Mrs Misra’s general duties included the following – sale of postage stamps,
postal orders, National Savings products, travel products, financial services products, for
example, car or home insurance, personal loans, etc, home phone service in addition to
E banking and bill payment transactions. Post Office Ltd within its main branch post offices
and sub-post offices uses a computerised accounting system known as Horizon in relation to
the various types of transactions conducted over the counter and for the recording of daily,
F weekly and monthly figures in relation to those transactions. The system is used by the
operator to conduct all transactions carried out at the counter and therefore the operator is
able to view the extent of transactions conducted on a daily, weekly and monthly basis as
G well as provide information as to the state of stocks sold or received and cash received. A
Post Office operations manual is held at each post office outlet operating the Horizon
system.”

H “Post Office Ltd operates a system whereby all offices must bring to account all
of the transactions conducted over a period of a month as well as declare the correct amount
of cash and stock held at the close of business which ultimately leads to the office balance.

A This term is used throughout the Post Office when referring to the monthly practice of declaring the state of the office accounts.”

B “The accounting month for a post office would start with the actual cash and stock physically held on site known and this formed part of the starting figure used for accounting purposes for that month. As the month progresses a large number of transactions are performed over the counter with the general public. For instance, if a customer purchases a C first class stamp for 36 pence the post office counter provides the customer with a first class stamp, i.e. stock, and therefore the starting figure reduces by 36 pence in the stock portion. However, the customer hands the post office 36 pence in cash. This therefore inflates the D cash figure by 36 pence and brings the starting figure back to its original state and a balance is once again established.”

E “The Horizon system keeps a running tally of all transactions conducted over the course of the month and the operator is able to request various reports from the system at any time to display the current state of the accounts such as cash on hand figure, etc. These can be viewed on the monitor or printed off. A balance is reached when the figures for both F the payments and receipts are the same. Any discrepancy in the two figures would result in the office declaring a shortage or a surplus of cash in the accounts.”

G “Once the operator is content with the office accounts they are then required to print off two copies of the branch trading account. These accounts show summaries of all transactions conducted that month together with the actual values of cash and stock to hand. Both copies of the branch trading account must be signed by the sub-postmaster as being a H true record of the state of accounts of the office. Both the trial and final copies are retained at the branch.”

A “Some time during Monday 14th January 2008 I received a telephone call from
Keith Noverre, Post Office Ltd auditor. He told me that there was going to be a substantial
audit shortage at West Byfleet post office. As a result of this information I then spoke to
Mrs Seema Misra, the sub-postmistress, and precautionary suspended her.”

B It is the last page now. “Under the terms of the sub-postmaster contract a
postmaster is prohibited from using post office cash for their own purposes. Sub-
C postmasters contracts section 12, paragraph 3 states the following: ‘The sub-postmaster is
expressly forbidden to make use of the balance due to Post Office Ltd for any purpose other
than the requirements of the post office service and he must on no account apply to his own
D private use for however short a period any portion of Post Office Ltd funds entrusted to him
or her. They must also be careful to keep the post office money separate from any other
monies. Misuse of Post Office Ltd cash may render the offender liable to prosecution and/or
the termination of his contract of appointment.’”

E “I produce as exhibit ER1 the contract which Mrs Misra signed agreeing to be
bound by the terms of her contract and by the rules contained in the book of rules and the
F instructions contained in those postal instructions issued to her. In addition I also produce as
exhibit ER2 the appropriate page from the sub-postmasters contract which details the sub-
postmaster’s responsibility for post office stock and cash.”

G Those items are copied in our bundle, members of the jury. You can see it is page
11 and 12. Page 11, the sub-postmaster’s contract, dated 29th June 2005, signed by Mrs
Misra with a witness having witnessed the signature who signed below. Over the next page
H is one page from the contract dealing particularly in paragraphs 3 and 4, paragraph 3 with
the requirement that one cannot use Post Office Ltd cash for your own private use. It has to
be kept separate from the shop, and paragraph 4 dealing with the need for the sub-

A postmaster to ensure that the accounts of all stock and cash entrusted to him are kept in the form prescribed.

Your Honour, can I call a witness now, please, Andrew Bayfield?

B ANDREW BAYFIELD Affirmed
Examined by MR TATFORD:

Q. Your full name, please?

A. Andrew William Bayfield.

C **Q.** Mr Bayfield, it is a very big room and the jury are a long way away. Do speak nice and loudly, please. I don't think the microphone helps to any degree, so try and hit the wall behind the jury and then everybody can hear. Also when you give your evidence it is important to give it at a slow pace because his Honour and other people in court take a note of what you say.

A. Thank you.

E **Q.** What is your employment, please?

A. I am currently the National Appeals and Business Propositions Manager for Post Office Ltd. At the time of giving my statement I was the National Field Support Manager.

F **Q.** How long had you been that National Manager, the post you held when you made your statement?

A. From June 2007 until the start of this financial year when I changed roles.

G **Q.** How long have you actually been employed by the Post Office?

A. This is my 33rd year with the Post Office.

H **MR TATFORD:** When you were in the position you held at the time of the making of the statement what were your duties?

A. I managed and controlled the, what we call our network support field team which were the teams that deliver training to all new entrants who join Post Office Ltd whether

A

they be staff or agents and they were the audit team that would audit all of our branches both from a financial and a compliance position and the team that also delivers ad hoc intervention in branches. If a branch had a small issue or a problem they would be the team that would go out and help the branch, the sub-postmaster or the branch manager resolve those particular issues.

B

JUDGE STEWART: Training, audit and help?

C

A. Yes, your Honour.

MR TATFORD: What does the training of a sub-postmaster involve, please?

D

A. Okay. After appointment and before they actually go to their branch they are offered classroom training. We have 44 classrooms geographically spread around the United Kingdom. That classroom training, depending upon the size and the type of work that that particular post office branch undertakes would be either a minimum of one week in the classroom or two weeks if they did some of the more complex transactions like the checking centre(?) and passport applications or motor vehicle licences and things like that so ---

E

Q. Just pause there.

F

A. Sorry.

Q. So it can be two weeks training if the postmaster is going to be doing more complicated transactions?

G

A. It can. It is a minimum of actually one week in a classroom or two full weeks in the classroom. Week one of that every sub-postmaster gets from the very tiniest rural community post office to the busiest ones. The second week would be dealing with the more complex transactions. Following either week one or week two when they go to their branch and it is transferred across to their responsibility we have on site with them one of our training team who spends their full first working week with them, supporting them and

H

A

standing behind them, coaching them through some of the transactions that we might not have covered in masses of detail in the classroom.

Q. Pause there. Do remember people are taking a note of what you say.

B

A. Yes.

Q. So what does the trainer on site do?

A. He would help them organise their tills. Some branches have one big shared till.

C

Others have individual tills that clerks would be responsible for. They ensure that the operations manuals are there and they are up to date and they are fully inclusive.

Q. Do slow down. Just pause there for the moment.

D

A. Sorry.

Q. I think if you bear in mind you probably should speak about half the speed you are speaking. All right?

E

A. Sorry.

Q. They check the manuals, the right manuals are there, the trainers?

A. Yes.

F

Q. How many manuals are there in an office?

A. At that time there would have been four to five A4 folders. There were probably about that figure. They are quite large, quite complex. They detail exactly how every single transaction that would come across the counter should be dealt with, so it is a reference guide fully detailed in writing, often with pictures of some of the screen shots from the Horizon operating system so that people can work their way through it. So if it is a rare type of transaction that they don't do particularly often they can take the manual down and they can work their way through it and they can conduct it accurately and the customer gets what they should be getting.

H

A

Q. So an encyclopaedia of all the transactions ---

A. Absolutely, yes.

Q. --- every single one that might be needed at a post office?

B

A. Yes.

Q. So the pictures of screens in the manuals, are those pictures of the Horizon system screens?

C

A. Yes. They would also be sometimes pictures of application forms that a customer might bring in that they would not have necessarily as a reference document behind it so that the clerk can understand exactly what they should be doing.

D

Q. Are the manuals written in simple English or are they complicated? How would you describe them?

E

A. I believe they are written in simple English. I suppose having spent so long in the Post Office they seem simple for myself. The trainer on site would go through them with the sub-postmaster or the clerk. The helpline, the telephone helpline system at every branch has these exact manuals as well so ---

F

Q. Just pause there. So the manuals are there with every single transaction with them. You have gone on to talk about a helpline. Tell us, taking it slowly, about the helpline?

G

A. Okay. We have a dedicated customer helpline for sub-postmasters, so if they get into difficulties, if they have an issue in the branch from either a difficult transaction or some other occurrence they can phone our helpline. There are up to 200 operators available. They have, all of these manuals they have the capability if there was a particular security issue or something like that of contacting the appropriate departments to make sure support and help is delivered in person if required and ---

H

Q. Pause there.

A

A. Sorry.

Q. If a sub-postmaster or any member of staff were having problems with a transaction what would you expect them to do? Again take it nice and slowly.

B

A. If it was a rare transaction that they had never seen before I would expect them to consult the manuals. If they were still uncertain and the customer is still with them they can phone the helpline and by pressing the appropriate buttons on the helpline the helpline will know that the customer is there with them and they will pick that call up and they will try and talk to the sub-postmaster or the counter clerk through that particular transaction so it can be ended appropriately.

C

Q. So the person at the end of the helpline is made aware that there is a customer waiting?

D

A. Yes.

Q. So they have to get on with giving the advice to the person who has made the call?

E

A. Yes.

Q. The training of a sub-postmaster, presumably the existence of the helpline and the manuals is explained at an early stage?

F

A. Mmm mm.

Q. Is there ever any encouragement to a postmaster to try something of their own, to do something independently of the guidance?

G

A. No. We stress very much that the operations manuals are our bible. If I can explain, most of the transactions that we deal with across the counter are dealt with on behalf of somebody else. Of the 150 odd types of transactions we do the only one that Post

H

A

Office Ltd owns solely is the postal order. Most other transactions are dealt with on behalf of another agency.

B

Q. Pause there. So you are trusted by other agencies to conduct transactions on their behalf?

C

A. Absolutely, and in terms of some areas where regulatory compliance is, we very much dissuade people from doing things differently themselves. They must follow the operating rules otherwise we fall foul of potentially regulatory compliance and possibly legislative compliance.

D

Q. Can you help us, please, with what a transaction correction is?

A. A transaction correction is where the branch have incorrectly dealt with the accounting of a particular transaction.

E

Q. Could you give us a simple example, please?

A. A simple example might be with something like a giro business deposit, a giro account business deposit where a customer who runs maybe a small business or something has come in to pay their takings into their bank account, either their own or their company bank account. They have like a paying in book which would have a transaction receipt which we would retain and there would be counterfoils that we would stamp to give back to the customer to prove that we have accepted the money on their behalf or we would transact that money on their behalf. If they input that amount of money into the system incorrectly and then send the paperwork away there will be a mismatch between what is recorded on the system and what is actually physically present on the slip and also the amount of money that they have put into their till.

H

Q. How is the mismatch seen?

A

A. In the end it would be seen because the person who had made their deposit would receive a statement which says “you have deposited £100” when they have a receipt which says they have deposited £1,000.

B

Q. So the customer may alert the Post Office?

C

A. The customer may raise it or the client may raise it or the branch themselves at a later date might identify that they think they have made a mistake and they can contact our finance and accounting team and the only way you can now balance that out is for a transaction correction to be issued to the branch which could be a charged transaction correction which means they have to put money in or it could be an allowed in there which means that they had actually, they had transacted £1,000 instead of the £100 it was and therefore they would be short. So it enables the system to be balanced in order to get everything back on a level playing field.

D

E

Q. So to put it in simple terms using your example, a customer receives their statement and thinks “hang on. I paid in £1,000, not £100”, the query is raised, does somebody check and investigate what has happened before a transaction correction is issued?

F

A. Yes, they would. We have a very large team of people in Chesterfield.

G

Chesterfield is our finance and accounting division. They would go back to the records. They would also, because in this case there was a physical piece of paper which had an amount of money on it, they would contact Girobank and they would get photocopies of that or even the original back and that would be the evidence that would be presented to the sub-postmaster to say “this is an error.”

H

A

Q. Let us just take it in stages. So the complaint is made. The documentation is looked at by somebody at Chesterfield. Say, they find that the customer is right, what happens next, just in simple terms?

B

A. They would contact the branch to say they are going to be issued with a transaction correction.

C

Q. How would they contact the branch?

A. They would usually phone them in the first instance. They would talk to the branch and say "on such and such a date this has occurred. We are going to be sending this to you." It would come to them in an electronic format down the Horizon system so that they are aware it is coming. They will then accept it or they can ---

D

Q. Let us just take it in stages. So now that the branch is either telephoned. The branch is usually telephoned ---

E

A. Usually telephoned.

Q. --- to say there is a problem. There is going to be a transaction correction. How does the transaction correction actually appear?

F

A. It is sent electronically down the system. It comes on to the Horizon system and---

Q. So is it a message that you can read on the display?

G

A. Yes, yes, and it is formatted such that once it is accepted it would be like doing that transaction correctly and then the branch would have to either put the money in if they had not already had a surplus or they would have to take the money out.

H

Q. Let us just take it in stages first of all. What is the point of telephoning the branch to say that this is coming?

A. Two things, to put them on notice that it is happening. Also it is to talk to the sub-postmaster because the sub-postmaster may have assistants that work there for them and

A

they may not be aware that there has been a problem or there might be an issue within the operations of that particular branch.

B

Q. So let us just put ourselves now in the shoes of the sub-postmaster. They are told that there is this problem about the £100 going into the bank account where it should be £1,000. What would you expect the sub-postmaster to do?

C

A. In that particular case they would have under-copies, printout receipts of the transactions that they did on that particular date, so they would go to their files. They would get that out and check it. If it showed – well, it would show as a £100, say, a deposit they would then ask to see evidence to suggest to them why it actually should be £1,000.

D

Q. So in that example there is a piece of paper they can look at. Say, for a transaction though, not all transactions have pieces of paper. Let us take another example. Say, the Horizon system suggests £1,000 has been sent out to a cash centre and the cash centre only receives £100, how would the sub-postmaster check whether an error has been made at his or her end?

E

A. In the case of that particular transaction where the money was being remitted to a cash centre, the cash centre would have very detailed photographic evidence of the pouch arriving in the cash centre, being allocated to a particular person to deal with, that person opening that pouch, emptying that pouch and checking, physically checking. All of that is on camera.

G

Q. So that is all photographed?

F

A. It is all photographed, and the sub-postmaster would be invited if that cash centre was fairly near to go and see that photographic evidence.

H

Q. But what can the sub-postmaster do at their end to check if a mistake has happened?

A

A. At that point once the money has left the branch there would not be very much that they could necessarily do to check it because it has already physically gone.

Q. Can they go to Horizon at all for any assistance?

B

A. They can at any time pull up a transaction log or an event log to understand what transactions an individual has done in a particular stock unit or what the branch has done at any time for any particular product.

C

Q. Just pause there. Transaction log. Let us take a purchase, a book of stamps.

A. Yes.

D

Q. A book of stamps purchased at 11.30 yesterday in a post office. What would the sub-postmaster do to find the record on Horizon of a transaction at a time yesterday?

E

A. Okay. They can – within the Horizon system they can go in and they can search by a product, by a time frame or by individual stock unit if the branch has many different stock units. So they can enter a product look up number which would be a specific one for one particular product and it will give them all those transactions over the period of time that they indicate that they would wish to look for. So in your particular case if they wanted to check on that and they put in a book of first class stamps between 11.20 and 11.40 and if it was for the whole office it would prove, a transaction would come up and tell them how many books they have sold during that period of time. They can do that for the whole office or an individual stock unit.

F

G

Q. So using that information is it possible to find the record of the transaction itself, what it was, the timing?

H

A. Absolutely. They can do that and it would tell them ---

Q. Also does it show who did the transaction?

A. It would do.

MR TATFORD: How would it show that?

A

A. It would show that as against the user ID, so in most cases all the users of the Horizon system have individual user ID numbers. So you can even search by user ID numbers if that is something that you particularly wanted to do, but in this case it would tell them if only one transaction had been done for selling a book of stamps it would tell them the time that the transaction was done and which person who was logged on to the system actually did that transaction.

B

C

JUDGE STEWART: Can I just interrupt to check that I have got the right picture of what it is like behind the counter rather than in front of it as the members of the jury and I no doubt have been.

D

A. Yes, your Honour.

Q. I am getting the picture of an individual cashier starting work, collecting the drawer or whatever it is, which is the stock unit. Is that right?

E

A. Yes.

Q. And which has got money in it and tax disks and postal orders and that sort of stuff?

F

A. And, yes.

Q. Going to the position at the counter and putting the drawer wherever it has to go?

G

A. Yes.

Q. Then is there a keyboard and a monitor screen?

A. Yes. There is a keyboard and they would have to log on.

H

Q. They log on, user name and password?

A. And they should have, they all have separate user names and they should all have separate passwords.

A

Q. Is the screen a touch screen?

A. There is a touch screen facility and keyboard facility as well so you can use either.

B

Q. If it is somebody buying something for money, at some point the amount of money that is being paid has to go into the system, and is that done by the cashier tapping the keys?

C

A. The cashier could either tap the keys or they can use the touch screen. There is a facility to use the calculator on the screen to enter the amount of money you would either take from the customer or give to the customer, and then there is the facility when that transaction is completed and they have done everything they want you end that transaction.

D

It is wiped from the screen, put into the system. The money is either put into the till or taken out of the till depending on which way it is going and then you move on to the next customer.

E

Q. So if it is, I don't know, a book of stamps, the value of a book of stamps is something that the system will know at any particular time?

A. It is on the system, yes.

F

Q. So there is no need to key that in. But if it is somebody actually handing over some cash, the way the system knows how much cash has been handed in is by the cashier?

A. You manually enter £100.

G

Q. So it depends on the accuracy of that exercise?

A. Yeah. It is there in front of you.

JUDGE STEWART: Thank you. Forgive me for interrupting. I was not sure about that.

H

MR TATFORD: No. It is very helpful. Thank you. (to the witness) So can any transaction be found in this way using Horizon?

A. Yes.

A

Q. So if a sub-postmaster finds that there is some money missing in their accounts what can they do to find out what has gone wrong?

B

A. They can go back to the transaction or they can research those things for whatever period of time they wish to do, whether it is, you know, the last ten, fifteen minutes or whether it was the last week. They can select the time period over which they want to search for, and what it will not tell them is if somebody has deliberately put in £100 instead of £1,000. It will only tell them what the counter clerk has entered.

C

Q. But, if, for instance, they see an entry and it is, for example, the wrong price for a book of stamps, can that be easily seen then by looking at this data?

D

A. In that case, no, because the book of stamps is a set figure. The moment you go on to the keyboard and say "I would like to buy a book of ten first class stamps" it comes up with the correct value for that. It is only where they are able to do things like that, which is somebody gave me a thousand pounds but I have only entered it by mistake or deliberately as £100 then that is what the system would record and that is what goes down on the system.

E

F

Q. But what the system cannot tell you is if somebody has deliberately put false figures in?

G

H

A. No. One of the things that we do in our first week with them in the training school is sub-postmasters are made fully aware that they are responsible for the cash and stock in a branch and we encourage them to do regular snap checks of their staff if they have got staff employed – not all sub, you know, some sub-postmasters are the only employee – and we encourage them to do random checks of that, and they can come along at any time if they have staff and ask them to declare their cash which should then indicate whether or not there are surpluses or shortages within that particular stock unit.

- A** Q. So the sub-postmaster is encouraged to do regular checks on their staff?
- A. Absolutely because they are responsible for the cash and stock that we provide them with.
- B** Q. So if you want to do a check on a member of staff you don't warn them presumably?
- A. No. In fact most audits it would be a snap check.
- C** Q. So the sub-postmaster could do a mini audit of that person's stock ---
- A. Absolutely.
- Q. --- and compare what is actually there against the computer records?
- A. Yes.
- D** Q. That is dealing with snap checks of staff. But how regularly are there checks of say, the cash in the office – perhaps the most important commodity – but we have heard evidence already about monthly balances and a branch trading statement is produced at the end of the month. Is there just a check once a month or how often are there checks of the cash on hand in an office?
- E**
- F** A. Every night the last transaction that anybody does once they have finished serving is to declare their cash on hand.
- Q. So what do they do for that?
- G** A. Within the system they go into a screen which is declared, appropriately called “declare cash” and they would enter how many hundred pound notes if it was Scotland or Northern Ireland, how many £50 notes they have got, how many twenties, tens, all the way down.
- H** Q. By “declaring” what do you mean by that? What do they have to do to declare the cash to the computer?

A

A. On the screen they will have a breakdown of money available to them which would go from say, a hundred pound note all the way down to a 1p coin. They physically have to enter via the keyboard how much they have got in each denomination.

B

Q. Prior to doing that what do they physically do with the cash and the stock?

A. They should count it themselves so that they can enter it on to that system.

C

Q. So they count the tens and enter the amount of tens they have got, the amount of £20 notes. That is how it works, does it?

D

A. Yes, and on completion of that entry they have the ability to accept that figure. There is a discrepancy screen that they can go in and that screen would say “thank you very much. You are currently £25 over or 2p short” or whatever figure it actually is in relation to all the transactions that are still on hand, all of the stock that is still in the stock unit and all of the cash.

E

Q. So when a server on the counter does their cash declaration at the end of the day and having entered the figures the computer says “in fact you are £25 down” what happens then?

F

A. They would produce a printout, dependent upon how accurately they have checked everything as they enter it because there will be a coin hopper which might have anything in it like a couple of hundred pound of coin on it, you know, broken down.

G

Q. What is a coin hopper?

A. It is just a unit they have usually on the counter or in the counter drawer that holds the £2 coins, the £1 coins, all of the coins. It would depend if they physically absolutely counted every single one of them or sort of said “oh, that looks like £20 in £1 coins.”

H

Q. I see.

A

A. So generally speaking the small amounts, small discrepancies, up or minus depending upon how rigorously the branch operates and they have done it, they would probably just accept that, you know, £25 relatively close, could be up or minus. That is fine. They move on. That declaration of the cash is very important for us. It enables Post Office Ltd to understand how much cash is being used in the particular branch and ensure that we deliver the appropriate amounts of cash to the branch that it would need or that we request if – some post office branches have an awful lot more money paid into them than they need so we can request that they remit away money so we can recycle it back to other post office branches.

B

C

D

Q. So let us just understand that. Cash declarations, you have talked about every single member of the counter staff doing a cash declaration each day. That information of the declaration, does it go somewhere?

E

A. It goes into the system and it is monitored by, we have two teams, one in Leeds and one in Bristol who have the north of the country and the south of the country and they monitor all of that and they manage that process.

F

Q. So say the figures for West Byfleet go to the Bristol centre and somebody monitoring it thinks “they have got a lot of cash overnight” looking at the whole total. What happens then?

G

A. Generally speaking the system kind of manages itself. Where there are extremes of cash on hand or where post office branches are requesting additional cash to be sent to them an individual operator would look at those particular branches to try and understand why this is out of the norm for that particular branch.

H

Q. Presumably it is a security risk if too much cash is held overnight?

A

A. Or if too little is there then the branch might close and it causes a customer service issue.

Q. So if a decision is made that the branch does have too much cash what happens?

B

A. Via the Horizon system, on the screen they will be asked to remit an amount of money back that will get them down to the normal usage level that that particular branch would in general require.

C

Q. Those are the cash declarations. What the office needs to do is to perform the office balance each month. Are offices encouraged to have stock takes more frequently than once a month?

D

A. They are encouraged to and they can, they can at any point in that trading statement month produce a balance. It does not go into – it is not the full trading statement. It is a balancing period, and they can, having done that they would roll into the next balancing period and there is almost an unlimited number of balances you can do at any time during that trading statement period.

E

Q. What is the point of doing it more frequently than once a month? How does it help?

F

A. It helps in two respects. A lot of sub-postmasters do it weekly like we always used to before we moved this thing because it enables you to check where you are. It also reduces the memory capacity of the system. If you wait only until the end of the month the system has to manage five weeks worth, up to five weeks worth of data whereas if you do a balance period each week, you know, when you come to do that trading statement it is only the last week that you have to do. So a lot of sub-postmasters are very busy people, do it weekly so that on that last week of the period when they come to do it they are not hanging around

H

A

waiting for the system to produce the balance. We do encourage them to regularly balance their stock units so they know where they are but they don't have to.

B

Q. A certain amount of independence, complete independence is given to the sub-postmaster?

A. Absolutely. As long as they do the branch trading statement balance on their appropriate day, during that period they have the independence to manage the balancing process how they see fit for their particular branch.

C

Q. Presumably a post office deals with a lot of credit card transactions?

A. More debit card transactions than credit card transactions.

D

Q. More debit card, yes. But people pay in cash also using plastic?

A. We take everything, yes.

E

Q. When a customer pays for a transaction using a card, be it debit or credit, does the customer receive a receipt?

A. Yes.

F

Q. What about the branch? Is a receipt produced for the branch of the individual transaction?

A. Not on all, no.

G

Q. So if a postmaster wants to check whether something has gone wrong with a plastic card transaction what can they go to to have a look at the transaction?

H

A. If they thought there was an issue at the time they were actually doing that particular transaction they can pull off a receipt themselves at that particular time. If this was after, I don't know, an hour, a week later they would have to go back to the transaction and the event log and they would have to indicate what they were looking for and they

A

would be able to pull off the transactions that are recorded on the system for that particular either transaction or that particular product.

B

Q. So if a customer gets his credit card statement, say, and it shows that more money has been taken than was actually paid and he makes a complaint, the complaint is then investigated at Chesterfield. Is that right?

C

A. It would depend how they raised the complaint. If they raised it through their credit card company it would come back into our Chesterfield team. If they raised it in the particular branch, often the branch might be able to sort it out there and then. It would depend whether the branch accepted that they had made a mistake.

D

Q. How would the branch sort it out there and then?

A. If they pull off their transaction log and they look at the customer's receipt and they can see that there is any sort of difference there they would be able to understand and manage it from that particular process.

E

Q. The Horizon system, so many goods these days have bar codes on them?

A. Yes.

F

Q. If we go to Tesco's obviously as we know you can do the counter work oneself. Is there a bar code reader on the Horizon system?

A. Yes, there is.

G

Q. So does every person on a separate counter have a bar code reader?

A. Yes. Every terminal has a bar code.

H

Q. And if the bar code isn't working for some reason can the amount of a transaction be put into the computer in some way?

A. In most transactions you can manually enter it where there are numbers associated with the bar code that you could enter.

A

Q. So you can enter the numbers of the bar code?

A. Yes.

Q. How do you enter those numbers into Horizon? What do you touch?

B

A. You would get into the screen and then you would enter physically the, in a special window for that you would enter those, however many numbers there are.

Q. So can you enter the numbers by touching the screen?

C

A. Touching the screen or using the keyboard.

MR TATFORD: Or using the keyboard.

JUDGE STEWART: Does the screen say what the item is once you have completed entering the numbers?

D

A. It should do, your Honour, but without having the system actually here in front of me and going through all of it I can't say for certain that it would guarantee to say that if you entered the bar code for, I don't know, an electricity account payment that it would always come up and say that is like London Electricity or whatever. I mean, there are an awful lot of bar codes and transactions.

E

JUDGE STEWART: Yes.

F

MR TATFORD: Can I move on to training now? You have talked about the training of the sub-postmaster. What about the staff who may be employed? Who trains them?

G

A. It is the sub-postmaster's responsibility contractually to train their staff.

Q. Obviously offices vary in size and different amounts of staff would have been employed, but a sub-postmaster delegates the trust that is put in them to their employees?

H

A. Yeah. I mean, new sub-postmasters when we put them into the training school, if we have sufficient space and they would like to bring an assistant with them we would allow them to come along and have the same training. We don't always have the space to be

able to do that, but when we are on site in branch we will often train the sub-postmaster.

A

Sub-postmasters are not obliged to provide what we call personal service. You can be a sub-postmaster and actually not attend your particular branch. If they nominate an officer in

B

charge or a manager or somebody like that, that is the person we will train in all of the

accounting process and all the other things. We also do, after this one week's training on

C

their first full trading statement balance we go back to the branch for that particular day to

offer them support in their first full branch trading statement balance and we will spend

however long it takes to go through that process with them there and then and they will

D

produce that balance. We also because we have quite a large training team, if sub-

postmasters either are absentees or if they have still got concerns they have the ability to ask

for additional training and we regularly do additional training for sub-postmasters in all

sorts of products or accounting procedures.

E

Q. In relation to the sub-postmaster's training of their staff to what extent is it in the interests of the sub-postmaster to train their staff well?

F

A. Within their contract they are responsible for the performance of their particular sub-post office. They will have paid usually often quite a lot of money to have purchased

this branch. Their performance if it is inadequate or inappropriate can put their ongoing role

as a sub-postmaster at risk and therefore they may well have their contract terminated and

G

lose some or all of their investment, so it is very much in their responsibility to ensure that

their staff understand what they are doing, raise any particular issues and if necessary we

have and will send trainers out to support sub-postmasters.

H

Q. We have heard evidence already about how a sub-postmaster is liable to make good any loss out of their own pocket. What bearing does that factor have on the interests in the sub-postmaster in training their staff well?

A

A. It should have a significant impact. As I say, in some branches sub-postmasters have agreements with staff which they will make good small losses but not always.

Ultimately if a branch is losing money it is the sub-postmaster's responsibility to make that good and we will pursue them for that making good.

B

MR TATFORD: Yes. Could you wait there, please?

MR HADRILL: Your Honour, I can certainly start cross-examination, but at some stage I would ask for a short break so I can take some instructions from Professor McLachlan who sits behind with regard to a number of notes he has passed me.

C

JUDGE STEWART: Yes.

MR HADRILL: Thank you.

D

Cross-examined by MR HADRILL:

Q. You are involved in fact as you have told us the Field Support Manager and certainly you were for the purposes of 2007?

E

A. Yes.

Q. And you have been involved in training, have you, then prior to that or not?

F

A. I had a number of roles within Post Office Ltd. Some of them have had involvement in training. All of my roles have been involved in frontline operations.

Q. Yes, but in regard to training itself?

G

A. I have delivered training. I have a number of training issues I have delivered in branch, yes.

Q. What you can say is this. Clearly you are a support manager and have been from June 2007?

H

A. Yes.

A

Q. You could give me a recital of what from your experience as the director or support manager what you would expect to be the conduct of training in June 2007 and you rely upon your own experience as an individual trainer prior to that what would be good practice?

B

A. Yes.

C

Q. Thank you. The training in the classroom, how many persons would be seated in a classroom?

A. Anything from one on one to one up to eight. We don't have classrooms where more than eight people attend, so it could be individual training, depends on ---

D

Q. You would not know really as to how many persons Mrs Misra sat with in regard to receiving her tutoring in the classroom?

A. I really could not comment. I don't know.

E

Q. You have got no records as to the training for her?

A. I don't believe we have, no.

F

Q. No. You have not because we have asked and we have got none. All right. So we have got nothing to show in regard to assessment taking place as to her understanding in the classroom, have we?

A. No formal record, no.

G

Q. No. There is no testing that is carried out or written examination to see whether all the information that has been provided in the classroom has actually either been understood or mentally computed?

H

A. Our classroom tutors actually ask the delegates "have you understood it? Have you seen it?" They have a system in the branch that they will put transactions through. The

tutor wanders around and sees how they are doing and they produce balances to prove that.

A

So is there a formal record? No. Is there an ad hoc record? Absolutely.

Q. Yes, but there is no written exam at the end of it, is there?

A. No.

B

Q. We have a situation where a postmaster or mistress has spent a lot of money to operate a sub-post office and they have to go through, it is like a driving test. You may want to go and buy a car but you cannot drive a car until you pass your driving test?

C

A. Legally, no.

Q. You are not going to be allowed to run a post office until you have sat the training course for a week?

D

A. Yes, you are correct.

Q. And if you turn around at the end of it and say "I didn't understand a word of that" you are not going to let them loose in their post office, are you?

E

A. We would not, no.

Q. No, and if the person wants to make good their investment the easiest thing to do is to say "yes, thank you?"

F

A. I would hope that they would not do that. I would hope that they would raise issues and I would hope that ---

Q. Yes, hope?

G

A. Yes.

Q. But they see it as an investment, a post office which is waiting to be operated and they cannot do that until they have told you they have understood it?

H

A. If the sub-postmaster says they have understood things we would accept that they have understood things.

A

Q. Would it not be wise to sit down with some multiple questions, tick boxes and so you can get an independent assessment of actually whether they did or didn't understand the training course?

B

A. To some extent we do that both in the classroom and on site and the trainer on site, if they still don't believe the sub-postmaster is competent they will stay on and they can stay on and they have stayed on.

C

Q. But you have got no records to show anything one way or the other?

A. No.

Q. And we don't know ---

D

A. We have also got no records to say that they didn't understand.

Q. No. So we are making an assumption that this lady, Mrs Misra, has left your classroom with the competence that you require to run the Horizon system?

E

A. And she has a trainer on site with her for the first six days.

Q. We will come to that. The jury has been told about the defence case statement.

They were served a detailed defence case statement in the opening when they explained the case to the jury. If I can just read you and ask for your comment?

F

A. Okay.

G

Q. "The first week of training from 30th June 05, training on the Post Office Horizon system was conducted on site by the Post Office trainer, Junaid(?)" You would expect some notes to be taken or compiled by a trainer?

H

A. They would have a training brief to ensure that they cover all the appropriate things.

A

Q. Yes, but would it not be good practice that at the end of the week or the end of each day the trainer sets out a log of what they did, what was undertaken, what concerns and you sign off at the end of the week?

B

A. Are you talking about the week on site actually in the branch?

Q. On the site, yes.

C

A. Dependent upon the busyness of the branch and everything else I would have hoped Junaid would have each day gone through with her what they have done, how they have understood it and how they have coped with it. There is no formal record of that, that taking place.

D

Q. You would hope that that would have taken place?

A. I believe it did but I cannot guarantee that it did.

Q. You have no records?

E

A. No.

Q. So you hope that your trainer would make some notes or keep a log or record but if it was not done it was not done?

F

A. They may well have, but bearing in mind how long ago this was, you know, we would not necessarily retain those records for ever and a day.

Q. Would you review any records that were kept in regard to monitoring the efficiency of the trainer?

G

A. The trainer's line manager would do that, yes, absolutely. They have regular one to one's.

H

Q. For the second week of training on site, a trainer called Michael?

A. Yes.

Q. You know these people, do you?

A A. I do indeed, yes.
Q. During both periods accounting losses occurred on a daily basis. Do you know anything about that?

B A. I don't know what particular numbers you are talking about, no.

Q. Do you have any records for the second week of training?

A. Again I can't say. I didn't do that training so I can't say what those people kept.

C Q. So all you can say is what you would hope did occur?

A. What I know we do in over a thousand branches every year for the past six or seven years is what we delivered in new sub-postmaster training, yes.

D Q. The threat is effectively this. The contract has been signed by the postmistress or postmaster. If they are not being honest in saying they understood the system the pain is that they are going to pick up any losses?

E A. I don't believe it is a threat. It is a contractual agreement that they will be responsible for losses. I am certain and I know for a fact that we don't treat sub-postmasters in that threatening manner, certainly not new sub-postmasters.

F Q. It is a fear that they have?

A. I beg your pardon?

G Q. It is a fear that is clearly instilled in them in training that losses are their responsibility?

A. We make them aware. It would be unreasonable of us not to make them aware, would it not?

H Q. Right.

A. So we are making them fully aware of what might happen if they don't operate their branch effectively for themselves.

A

Q. In regard to the clerks and staff that are employed by the postmistress they can only provide the same training which is commensurate with their own understanding of the system?

B

A. They can. I mean, in many cases a sub-postmaster might buy a sub-post office that has fully experienced staff in it. I don't know the circumstances in this particular case, but there may well be very experienced staff already there that they undertake as part of the transfer of undertakings.

C

Q. But the reality is the postmistress is responsible for training their staff?

A. Absolutely, yes.

D

Q. And you can only train to the standard of your understanding of the system?

A. But they can request additional help and support.

E

Q. They can ask for additional help and support, but if perhaps late in the day they are asking for the additional help and support it may start to focus upon losses which have occurred?

A. It could do, yes.

F

Q. And if they have been concealed it would be certainly a serious matter as far as the Post Office is concerned or the Royal Mail?

A. It would do indeed, yes.

G

Q. If I can just say this, that again looking at the defence statement which I am sure as it has been outlined to the prosecution will be put in due course, between 30th June 05 and October 05 the losses increased and then we have got calls to the helpline. We will deal with that in a moment. A line manager, Miss Timiko Springer. Do you know Miss Timiko Springer?

H

A. I have met her, yes.

A

Q. She attended at the request of the defendant to give assistance.

A. Timiko would, that would be her role, to help in both customer care and customer sales as well as operational practice and procedure.

B

Q. So it appears that certainly in October 05, what I am reading to you, that the defendant is admitting that she didn't really have an understanding and needed some expertise, as it were, from a line manager?

C

A. Okay, and I can't tell you whether that proceeded into a formal request for us to send a trainer out to support that or whether Timiko was able to offer the guidance and support that was required to resolve that matter.

D

Q. I put these to you because you are the trainer.

A. Fine, fantastic, yes.

E

Q. I am just, as it were, asking for assistance in regard to matters which will be raised.

A. Yes.

F

Q. In regard to the Horizon system you didn't sit down and create this piece of computer equipment, did you?

A. No, I didn't.

G

Q. In fact what happens is the Post Office or Royal Mail have bought in a system which they have asked to be designed to meet certain functions?

A. Yes.

H

Q. And you end up with the hardware. You are given the hardware, the computer, the screen, the monitor. You are given some training obviously yourselves, the trainers, and told to go out and train?

A. Yes.

A Q. You take as read or gospel that whatever appears on the Horizon screen is accurate?

A. Having entered it or seen it entered, yes, I would.

B Q. Whatever information is provided at the end of each week or trading period, the sub-totals you accept ---

A. Yes.

C Q. --- as an employee that presumably you can trust that everything has been put together correctly and it is going to come up with the correct figures?

A. Yes.

D Q. I.e. that trusting that the person operating the cash desk in an individual sub-post office has actually managed to put in the correct information?

A. Yes.

E Q. Trusting that the people at Chesterfield who have accessed the Horizon system have also equally put in correct information?

A. Yes.

F Q. Trusting that the outside agencies you work for have also connected and put in correct information?

A. Yes.

G Q. And also trusting the computer system itself?

A. Yes.

Q. We are going to hear from the computer experts some time.

A. Yes.

H Q. It relies upon you having faith in the system?

A. It does. It also relies in us being able to challenge the system.

A

Q. Yes. I am going to come to that in a moment and I am going to ask for a short break in regard to certain technical details.

A. Yes.

B

Q. But effectively you as the employee of the Royal Mail or the Post Office rather take it as read or accepted that what appears as figures given by the computer are accurate?

A. I believe it to be a robust system, yes.

C

Q. You believe it is?

A. Yes.

MR HADRILL: But you have not got the expertise. You just accept ---

D

A. No. I accept.

JUDGE STEWART: He does not have computer expertise but he has practical experience of working with it.

E

MR HADRILL: Indeed. (to the witness) If there were errors occurring, if there were computing problems you would expect the Post Office to inform you?

A. If we were aware of them, yes.

F

Q. If you were aware of them you would expect the Post Office to immediately inform you or delayed information?

A. I would hope that as soon as we were aware of them if there were any that we acted upon them.

G

Q. Yes. Moving on to transaction errors or computing problems, hardware problems, you have told us that there is a helpline, a number that can be telephoned. Yes?

H

A. Yes.

A

Q. You say 200 operatives. That is 200 operators who are at a switchboard. A person phones up and says "I have got this problem or that problem" and then it is routed to the relevant department?

B

A. If it is a particular issue that they can't deal with at that time, if it is any sort of specialism they would pass it on to the appropriate department, yes.

C

Q. What is NSBC?

A. Sorry, NSBC?

Q. Yes. I am going to look at one of these logs but ---

D

A. I think it is NBSC. It is the National Business Support Centre. That is our helpline.

Q. Right. That is in Chesterfield, is it?

E

A. Some of it is in Chesterfield. Some of it is in Durham. Some of it is in Sunderland.

F

Q. So if you have got a hardware problem that basically the machines just keep switching off, you can phone the helpline or if there is something wrong with the screen or it has just packed up they will put you through to the helpline?

G

A. They would route you through to the Horizon help desk. They would take your details and depending upon the severity of the particular issue would deal with it in whatever our service level agreement is with regards to that particular problem.

Q. That is with Fujitsu?

A. Yes.

H

Q. And if it is financial problems and transactions that would go off to the financial department?

A

A. It could go to Chesterfield or it could be dealt with by the operator if they are able to fix that at that time.

B

Q. The purpose of that is this, that although you say that there are manuals in the office you hope that they would be complete?

A. I believe they are, yes.

C

Q. But you would not know whether there were a set of manuals or a complete set of manuals at the West Byfleet offices in 2005/2006?

A. The trainer on site would have gone through those with the sub-postmaster. That is part of their process, their procedure.

D

Q. They should have. You don't know, but you accept that they should have?

A. I have to accept what you are saying there, but I believe they would, well, I am certain that they would have done that.

E

Q. Busy post offices don't have necessarily time to deal with keeping a customer there whilst they thumb through a manual?

F

A. I am not sure necessarily I can answer that. They should undertake the transaction correctly and fully. If that means looking up something to enable to do it that is what they should do. If they choose to short cut that I have no control over that.

G

Q. That is down to the sub-postmasters if there is a financial error?

A. Yes.

H

MR HADRILL: I think if I could ask just for five minutes to discuss a number of matters which I will deal with in regard to the Horizon system?

JUDGE STEWART: We will stretch our legs. (to the witness) Could you keep yourself to yourself while you are waiting, please?

A. Do you wish me to stay here?

A

JUDGE STEWART: You can go out into the concourse and get yourself a cup of something if you wish, but don't talk about the case. That is the main thing, please. All right. We will say five past twelve.

B

(Adjourned for a short time)

(In the absence of the jury)

C

MR HADRILL: I will only be about ten minutes. I can put Mr Bayfield out of his misery there he is going to be here until the lunch hour.

A. Thank you.

(Jury return to court)

D

ANDREW BAYFIELD (continued)

Cross-examined by MR HADRILL:

E

Q. Thank you, your Honour, and the members of the jury for their patience. Can I just show you two little cards? In actual fact they are crib sheets. (handed) Although you are meant to handle and do have large A4 manuals, they are provided by the Post Office, two sided one sheet of hardboard which sets out their processes in order to touch the screen or the keyboard?

F

A. Yes.

Q. So the idea being that you have an easy reference card for the cashier or clerk without going through the manuals?

G

A. Yes. That would be the idea of these.

MR HADRILL: I don't know if the jury – it is just a matter of looking for a few seconds.

JUDGE STEWART: Yes.

H

MR HADRILL: Your Honour, I have got copies here, paper copies.

JUDGE STEWART: I think these are colour and ---

A

MR HADRILL: These ones also are coloured prints. I have got copies here. Perhaps it is easier if I just hand these out to the jury? (handed to jury) They are just little guides, simple to follow guides, but the reality is that would not give you, the guides which are there to be of assistance would not give you the in depth understanding to operate the Horizon system as a clerk or a sub-postmaster?

B

C

A. Solely if you walked in off the street and tried to use that probably not I would think. I mean, it would depend. We regularly update those as software changes occur and so I am assuming that they are valid for the period of time that Mrs Misra was the sub-postmistress.

D

Q. Thank you. In regard to the Horizon system itself, you have told us that a transaction correction could arise from – I will put it this way. You have told us that if there is a transaction error there would be a telephone call to alert the Post Office when it is discovered and so that would not be the same day as the transaction?

E

A. No. I mean, no, very much not. It could be, but it could be weeks or months later.

Q. It could be weeks or months later?

F

A. Yes.

MR HADRILL: You say that the transaction ---

G

JUDGE STEWART: Pause a moment, please, Mr Hadrill. (to the jury) What is the problem? (Pause)

H

MR HADRILL: Can we just rely upon the cards, please? I don't have two documents, six of one and six of the other. I don't know whether the front row have got six of the same. It may well that the front row have to swap with the back row. Can I apologise? I will provide proper copies of both sets but if we can just hand these to the jury so they can just have a quick glance?

A JUDGE STEWART: I don't think the detail is crucial. It is just the general nature of the sort of thing that is available.

B MR HADRILL: Yes, indeed. (handed to jury) They have been stapled together. They have been sitting here. I didn't look to see whether they had been stapled together or not. (to the witness) Anyway in regard to the correction, it could be a day, it could be weeks, it could be months?

C A. Yes.

D Q. So the Post Office could receive a message saying "there is a correction of whatever figure and we are going to deduct X amount", the idea being that if you put in £1,000 and somebody comes in with a chequebook, whatever bank it happens to be, cashes a cheque or buys some products and it is for £100 and you mistakenly put in £1,000, it is a cheque sent off in the pouches at the end of the trading period to Chesterfield. The cheque is then sent presumably to the issuing bank, whatever bank that would be so that whoever E issued the cheque, the customer, the cheque is now back in the bank which issued the chequebook and they can see that there is an error and say they are not paying that. They F then phone up or send a message to the finance department at Chesterfield saying "it is down there as a thousand pounds. We only say it is a hundred. Therefore on our exchange banking system we are clawing back £900." Yes?

G A. Yes. We would provide the sub-postmaster with that.

H Q. So the head office at Chesterfield has now found that it is £900 short because money has been claimed back by the issuing bank and they offer £900 back from the sub-post office, and so they will phone up and say there is an error. You would expect them to?

A. Yes.

A

Q. Certainly there would be a transaction message sent on the Horizon system which would flash up on the screen in the branch?

A. Yes.

B

Q. And that could be telling them that there is going to be a claw back of money in X amount and that will happen?

C

A. It will happen, but the sub-postmaster or sub-postmistress has the right to challenge that, has the right to ask to see the evidence to justify this mistake. Yes, they do and they can put that in abeyance until such time as we have been able to prove.

D

Q. The post-mistress has the opportunity, but he or she has no hard evidence in the office any more?

A. Presumably they would have the transaction log that related to the hundred pounds and a photocopy or the original cheque for a thousand.

E

Q. I am coming to that in a second. But anyway you are assuming that if they had taken a photocopy themselves in the branch and all the hard material, the hard copies had been sent back to Chesterfield ---

F

A. Yes.

Q. --- who would then send it on to whatever bank or whatever agency has provided that service?

G

A. But we would ask them to prove to us the mistake has occurred. If they can prove to us we would pass that evidence on to the sub-postmaster.

H

Q. You talk about the transaction log being available. How long is it available for to the sub-post office?

A. Generally up to at least six months. In some respects it can be longer. There are--

Q. Do you know?

A

A. Well, I certainly know you can go back six months from the trading period you are in definitely.

Q. Do you have to make a special request for that?

B

A. No. That is available within the branch.

Q. Then you would have to have training to be able to know what you are doing and looking for?

C

A. Again the system is fairly intuitive in the fact that it would take you through what you need to enter.

Q. You have told us that transaction faults can arise from incorrect entry into the system from the Post Office. Do you know whether transaction corrections or faults can arise from the Horizon system itself?

D

A. I guess potentially, yes, they could. I am not aware of any but potentially they could.

E

Q. Potentially, but you are not aware. Did you know of any problems that arose with a post office in Scotland called Calendar Square?

F

A. Yes. I know the sub-postmaster at Calendar Square.

Q. And faults had arisen in those circumstances with the Horizon system?

A. Yes, and I believe he raised them with us.

G

Q. So bugs were there in the Horizon system which had been not known to the Post Office or Fujitsu?

A. I believe that is the case. I am not an expert in that area.

H

Q. Causing reconciliation problems, saying he should have more cash than he actually has?

A. Mmm mm.

A

Q. And in fact declaring that he needs to pay over monies to balance the books?

A. I believe he then challenged that and it was investigated and that is how we have come to use that as a particular example, yes.

B

Q. But it is a financial balancing fault that was inherent in the Horizon system itself?

A. I generally cannot comment on that.

Q. No. I am just asking if you know. There are examples, certainly one example?

C

A. Certainly one, yes.

MR HADRILL: There could be more?

A. There could be. We have a very large network out there.

D

JUDGE STEWART: How many post offices are there in the country?

A. Currently there is about 11 and a half thousand post offices that are open.

JUDGE STEWART: Yes. They get closed quite often, don't they?

E

A. Unfortunately they do, yes.

MR HADRILL: In regards to you talk about giro slips and bank statements and paper printouts from the machine, the Horizon system prints out very little documentation for the purposes of retention in the sub-post office?

F

A. At the time of the transaction, yes. We are trying to reduce the amount of paper.

Q. So there is very little copy documentation that is provided to the cashier, clerk or sub-postmaster?

G

A. Yes. Most of it goes to the customer.

Q. So a slip gets given to the customer and what it is reliant upon is the integrity of the Horizon system to store the information correctly?

H

A. Yes.

A

Q. Because there is no paper printout for the transactions that are there to be stored in a file generally for the sub-post office?

A. There are a number of reports that sub-postmasters pull off at the end, sorry.

B

Q. At the end of the day you can press a button and say what is the balance account?

A. You can do that. You can also pull off a number of transaction reports for the various transactions that you have done and we actively encourage sub-postmasters to do that for things that don't generate a piece of paper that they would retain within the branch.

C

So you might do 150, 200 swipe cards. You can get the printout of all of those on one report. So if a customer came back to say "you have done this and we have got a different figure there" then you can deal with it.

D

Q. But there will not be individual pieces of paper? You have to press a button to get a full printout at some stage?

E

A. No. We transact about 40 million transactions a week in a post office.

Q. It is relying essentially for the sub-post office on the integrity of the computer system to come up with the correct figures at the end of the day or the end of the week?

F

A. Absolutely, yes.

Q. And not to spend lots and lots of time pushing buttons necessarily to get out lots of transaction data which perhaps does not have any purpose because there is no issues raised?

G

A. Yes.

H

Q. In regard to hard copies, if I were to come into the post office and wanted to pay an electricity bill or a tax bill or anything you have a form which you fill in, the customer fills in their details at the bottom how much is being paid to the electricity, gas board or

A

what else. The post-mistress or master stamps the bottom half, tears it off and gives it back to them?

A. (words missing from tape) ---

B

Q. So the hard copy as well (inaudible)

A. It is given to the customer.

Q. And if there was a detachable half and if it were taken off it would go back to Chesterfield anyway, would it not?

C

A. It would be recorded on the giro system and sent that way, yes.

Q. Hard copies would not be kept in the post office?

D

A. There would be an under copy of the amount of money and the account number that it was paid into. That would be retained within the branch.

Q. If there was an under copy and if it had been retained, it should be retained in the branch, it could have just been sent to Chesterfield?

E

A. Sorry. I am probably confusing you. If your bill was not a bar coded bill and it was the traditional one which is the top half is yours and the bottom half is the payment that the Post Office retains, entering it on to the Horizon system you would enter it against an account number and the amount of money you would take. That then bottom receipt would be sent away to Girobank but the branch would retain an under copy of all of the amounts of those transactions that went away and that would be retained within the branch.

F

Q. That would be a list of you would press the button and it prints off a list of ---

G

A. It gives you a final printout, so it would give you the account number and/or that you paid £50 or whatever it was.

H

Q. A piece of paper would not be generated then. You could print it off later on?

A. It is printed at the end of the day when you cut off those transactions.

A

Q. Yes. You talk about the customer returning to notify a mistake. If the customer has a benefit of a surplus outstanding, given more money than expected, that would not show up on the Horizon system, would it?

B

A. If the ---

Q. It would show up as a discrepancy at the end of the day?

A. No. If the customer came back and said "you have given me £100 instead of £10" and they give you the £90 back, yes.

C

Q. Yes, but if they did ---

A. If they did that then you would deal with it. If they didn't come back then the only way you would be aware of that is at the end of the day or the end of the week. You would be that amount of money short in that till.

D

Q. In regard to declaring cash on hand presumably the Horizon system is conducting all the transactions. It is double entry. Basically you sell a pack of first class stamps. That has gone out of stock. It should be cash on hand?

E

A. Yes.

Q. People come in with their debit cards, want some money, that will show?

F

A. Yeah.

Q. One account against whatever Home office or Government department has to square that up at the end of the week or the end of the month. The cash has disappeared so there would be a continuing change, fluctuations?

G

A. It would be balanced, yes.

Q. So at the end of the day the Post Office can check as to how much cash there should be in the safe at any one moment?

H

A. Sorry, the postmaster or the Post Office?

- A** Q. The postmaster or the Post Office central itself?
- A. We could do if we went into the system and identified the individual branch and interrogated the system in that respect. We don't do that every day for every branch.
- B** Q. But it is not a difficulty to be able to get a return in which the postmaster or mistress declares "this is my cash" and check it against what the Horizon system has recorded?
- A. Provided everything has been recorded correctly, yes.
- C** Q. It is an easy thing to do if you wanted to do for the computer to churn out the figure that should be there and the figure that has been declared?
- A. What, in the branch or nationally for all post offices?
- D** Q. Nationally, in the central office.
- A. We can do that provided everybody enters everything correctly and they follow the proper procedure, yes.
- E** Q. So you should be able to see quite easily whether the declaration is correct or not?
- A. Within certain parameters, yes.
- F** Q. You have said it is difficult to carry – you are talking about snapshots or snap checks – but that would depend upon availability of a lull in trading, would it not?
- A. It could do or you could, if you had a particular concern you could just close that person off from serving(?) and you could do a snap check that way if you had a particular
- G** issue.
- Q. That is dependent upon how many tills you have got?
- A. And what the queue is like and everything else.
- H** Q. But effectively the Post Office is like a mini-bank. It is selling financial services, isn't it?

- A** A. Mmm mm.
- Q. Postal orders, stamps, bonds, cashing people's benefits?
- A. Yes.
- B** Q. They are on Swipe card as well, are they not?
- A. They are now, yes.
- Q. Foreign exchange?
- C** A. Yeah.
- Q. So branches will have a turnover of several million pounds?
- A. Over a trading period they could well do. It could be more than several million.
- D** Q. Yes. I think certainly for the thirteen month period that the calculations are for this branch, that is from December 06 to December 07, it is somewhere about £48 million?
- A. It could be. I mean, at any one point we have something like £1.2 billion worth of transactions in the system.
- E** Q. So we are talking about large sums of monies coming in and going out to keep track of?
- A. In paper terms, yes.
- F** Q. And, as you have told us, the best practice would be for a postmaster or mistress to do weekly balances, to carry out snapshot checks. It does not always happen?
- A. We encourage them to do that but it is their choice.
- G** Q. At the end of the trading period which is what, four to five weeks, they should have completed their trading balance and returned all the figures?
- A. Yes.
- H** Q. And if they have not it is down to them if there are faults in regard to the discrepancies?

A. Yes.

MR HADRILL: Thank you very much.

Re-examined by MR TATFORD:

Q. It is up to the sub-postmaster how regularly they check matters, but in terms of the monthly balance is that something that does have to happen?

A. They must, they must balance their account within that trading period, yes.

Q. What happens if you don't balance the account?

A. Well, because we have so many post offices there are four groups of branches, A, B, C, D, so not every post office branch balances every week, so they cycle in that period. If a particular branch does not produce its trading statement on the day that it is supposed to, within the day following that or the next day they are contacted to understand what has happened. If there is a genuine reason we can push them back a week. If not we would send somebody out to investigate.

Q. Can the post office shop still work if the balance has not been done?

A. Yes. There is a facility to go longer than that trading period if required and often sometimes we do that, and the latest example was probably last year when the bad weather happened lots of branches automatically extended it by one week because they often could not get into a branch to do that thing, so we would contact the branch if they had not done it on their trading period date and if there isn't a genuine reason or a genuine excuse we might send somebody out because we would have some concerns.

Q. So if you don't do the balance the chances are the auditors will knock on the door?

A. Potentially, yes.

Q. Some names of trainers were put to you, Junaid and Michael.

A

A. Yes.

Q. And you said that you knew them?

A. I know them, yes.

B

Q. Do you know enough of them to have a view as to their abilities as trainers?

A. I do because if they were not capable they would not be in that team still.

MR TATFORD: So Junaid, what sort of trainer is he?

C

A. Junaid Tanvier is a field support advisor, so he will go out and do training and he will go and do auditing. He is an experienced gentleman who came through the crown post office system so he has worked on one of our crowns. As vacancies have occurred within the team he has applied for them and he has been picked up on that team and he operates within that team. Michael is exactly the same.

D

JUDGE STEWART: Michael, do you know his last name?

E

A. Michael Opibeyi(?)

JUDGE STEWART: Opibeyi?

F

A. Yes.

MR TATFORD: Just so we understand, you mentioned a crown office. What is a crown office?

G

A. There are apparently 373 crown post offices in the United Kingdom. They are post offices that are wholly owned by Post Office Ltd. The staff in them are employees of Post Office Ltd. They are usually the very big ones, that there is a branch just here in Guildford which is a crown post office. It is identified differently as a sub-post office. It is a crown post office. They are our staff there and they are usually the very big ones and they are very busy.

H

Q. Yes. Those are the ones with the long queues?

A. Unfortunately, yes.

A

MR TATFORD: Yes.

JUDGE STEWART: I don't think that is restricted to them.

B

MR TATFORD: No, absolutely, but they are the ones with lots of counters where customers hear a tannoy saying "approach counter number 9?"

A. "Counter clerk 2, please", yes. Unfortunately they probably are the ones with the longest queues.

C

Q. Yes. Can you help us with this? You said the Post Office is trying to reduce the amount of paper. Is there a reason for that?

D

A. We supply all of the consumables for the Horizon system, so unlike other franchises sub-postmasters don't go out and buy the paper rolls, the printer ribbons and all the other things. We supply them at no cost to the sub-postmaster. When you are supplying the printer roll which is, pardon me, but it is like a small toilet roll in size, when you are supplying hundreds and hundreds of them because they produce one for the customer and one for the branch it is an incredibly expensive thing. It is also quite difficult for sub-postmasters to store. If you have a wodge of paper receipts which you are required to keep for two years and you have that each day many sub-post offices are quite small. They don't have huge amounts of storage space, and therefore they often can't keep them appropriately. So we have looked at how we can reduce the amount of paper in the system both from a green perspective as well as an operational perspective and how we can reduce our operating costs as well.

G

H

Q. And reducing paper, say, for instance, the member of staff on the counter not keeping a piece of paper from the transaction, does that have any effect on the speed with which transactions can be completed?

A

A. Not particularly. It might make it like half a second or so faster.

B

Q. You were asked about the two week training period, and the scenario being presented to you was of a person sitting in the class and not understanding anything and keeping quiet about it and then going on to run their post office. In relation to that scenario is there anything you wish to add to the answers that you gave in cross-examination?

C

A. Only that there are a number of transactions that they would do in the classroom that require them to use the system and to produce a result, and the trainer in the classroom will spend time looking at those results because everybody will be doing the same and everybody will be getting the same results, so that they can see that people have understood and spent time coaching or refreshing or going over things again should the delegate require it and that does happen. You know, I have seen, I observe my trainers in the classroom as part of the ongoing process and I have seen them do things like that, spend more time ensuring that it is clear what is required of the new sub-postmaster.

D

E

Q. What advantage would there be in a person training to be a sub-postmaster remaining silent about their inability to understand?

F

A. None whatsoever.

Q. What disadvantage might it have?

G

A. Significant. I mean, if they really don't know what they are doing they could end up making some fairly significant mistakes and making those mistakes good.

H

Q. You were asked about notes kept of onsite training and the scenario being put to you there was of all sorts of things going wrong, losses occurring. What would you expect to happen if that was a feature of a person's onsite training experience?

A. If they had doubts about the capability or the competency of the new sub-postmaster they would talk to their line manager and there would be an agreement that they

A

might stay on an additional day or an additional week to give additional support until they were confident. They do make notes. They do have a tick sheet of the things that they would need to go through, why those records are not there. I mean, we don't keep everything forever. But if they had a particular concern or a particular issue they could raise that and they – and we do and we have spent additional time with new sub-postmasters on many occasions giving them that little bit of extra support and encouragement.

B

C

Q. Would you expect notes to be kept or notes to be taken even if things actually went perfectly well?

D

E

A. It would probably be more of a tick sheet that yes, we have gone through this transaction and, yes, the sub-postmaster understood this and, you know, we can move on. We don't need to do that. Not every transaction might be observed because if a customer does not walk in for a particular transaction we can't observe it, so the trainer may well do some role play with them if we have not had an opportunity to go through that particular transaction.

F

G

H

Q. Does the trainer have an interest in the successful understanding of the person they are training?

A. A slight interest. I mean, if you are onsite with somebody for six days working very closely with them in confined spaces you do tend to develop a relationship with people, so it would be about helping them be successful, and most of my training team leave their mobile telephone numbers with new sub-postmasters and often they will exchange texts or even voicemail messages or direct calls around "how is it going? Is everything okay?" So the interest is in professionalism and great customer service.

Q. What effect might it have on a trainer if they allowed idiots on the loose in sub-post offices?

A

A. In today's post office we are very conscious of performance management of our team, so line managers will regularly see how branches are performing that particular trainers have been to, how their sales performances are and things like that as a way of judging the performance of a group of people. So they will use those as benchmarks to test, you know. So if I as a trainer was the worst performer in terms of losses or, you know, customer complaints and things like that, that would reflect in my performance management reporting.

B

C

MR TATFORD: A picture was being put to you of a rather intimidating classroom where there was an atmosphere of fear for the people aspiring to be sub-postmasters?

D

MR HADRILL: No. I didn't mean it that way.

E

MR TATFORD: I am so sorry.

A. And I didn't take it that way.

F

MR HADRILL: Thank you very much.

MR TATFORD: How friendly is the atmosphere in the classroom?

G

A. It is professional but it is quite friendly. Again our classrooms are mocked up versions of a counter. They are probably not much bigger than the area that you currently sit in. There is a lot of banter between some of the people because there could be a range of people in the classroom. It could be a one on one situation. It is not meant to be intimidating, but we have an absolute duty to ensure the sub-postmasters understand the potentials that can happen to them if they don't operate their branch effectively and efficiently.

H

Q. So is the classroom actually set up like a little office?

A. As much as you can. I mean, fundamentally they would be pretty much like these two desks here with the systems operating with a dividing wall between the two and people

A

would sit in a – we have no classrooms where you can get more than eight people in. Most are six. They are usually rooms in our crown post offices. Guildford again is the classic example. It has a separate room to one side. There is a classroom, and we go through it. We have all the operational manuals there. We have a lot of Power Point presentations of some of the activities that people will undertake when they are in a post office. It is as close to real life as we can make it without it being a real live environment.

B

C

Q. So presumably can the trainer view what the trainee is doing on the equipment in the classroom?

D

A. They do. They walk around and they can see what they are doing and they can see what printouts they have got and they can compare that everyone has, you know, if they have done this one particular transaction they produce it and then they understand what the balance is. So they can see that people are capable of doing it.

E

Q. It is obviously right though, is it not, that, as was set out in cross-examination, if a member of staff hands over too much change to a customer or pays them out too much money in a benefit, something like that, if that happens then there is going to be a loss on the stock, a deficiency on the stock?

F

A. Yeah.

G

Q. What help does the Horizon system give to the member of staff in deciding what change to hand over?

H

A. You can enter – with on the screen you can enter, if you went back to your scenario about the book of stamps and somebody, you bought a book of first class stamps, ten first class stamps for £4.10, you can enter that they have given you a £50 note to pay for it and it will tell you what change to give, yeah, £45.90 or whatever.

Q. So the figure actually appears on the screen?

A

A. It will tell you – taking cash, once you have told it that you have taken in cash you can tell it how much cash you have taken in or cheque or debit card, and in this case if it was cash it would tell you “give change of X”, whatever X is.

B

MR TATFORD: So is there actually there a command along the lines of “give £4 in change?”

C

A. If you use that system to do that. If you tell it what it has cost and you tell it how you are being paid it will tell you how much change to give.

JUDGE STEWART: On the premise that the amount that is ---

D

A. Is entered correctly, yes, your Honour.

JUDGE STEWART: Yes. If you are handed a £10 note and your mind is somewhere else and you say you have got a £20 note?

E

A. Yes. Then it will tell you to give change for £20, not £10.

MR TATFORD: When the member of staff is telling the computer what money they have been given by the customer ---

F

A. Yes.

Q. --- does the amount of the money that they key into the system, does it appear on the screen?

G

A. Right in front of them, yes.

Q. Although you have a senior position you are familiar with the Horizon system?

A. I work on a crown post office probably once every five or six weeks, yes.

H

Q. Why do you do that?

A. One, to support the team. I believe that is my responsibility as a senior manager, and also to keep my hand in.

MR TATFORD: Tell us your experience. How difficult is it to use?

A

A. I believe it is incredibly easy but I guess I am biased. I do believe it is a very intuitive system. It is very easy to use and provided you take your time and you look at the screen and you follow the instructions on the screen you should be able to balance to the penny every week.

B

JUDGE STEWART: Do you?

C

A. There are occasions when I have had to put a few coins in. It is easy to give the wrong change I would have to say, but it is because I have given the wrong change rather than the system.

D

MR TATFORD: Does your Honour have any further questions for the witness?

JUDGE STEWART: No, thank you.

MR TATFORD: Might he be released?

E

JUDGE STEWART: Yes. Thank you very much for your time. That is it. You are finished now. You are free to leave.

A. Thank you very much.

(witness withdrew)

F

MR TATFORD: Can I call Andrew Dunks now, please? Your Honour, he has made a number of statements beginning at page 15 in the bundle and then a longer statement at page 18 following.

G

ANDREW DUNKS Sworn
Examined by MR TATFORD:

H

Q. Your full name, please?

A. Andrew Paul Dunks.

Q. Mr Dunks, are you employed by Fujitsu?

A. Yes.

Q. In what capacity, please?

- A** A. A security analyst. I work within a security team within the Fujitsu, Royal Mail Group accounts.
- Q. Fujitsu is the manufacturer of the Horizon system. Is that right?
- B** A. Yes.
- Q. You have provided a number of rather long witness statements, have you not, in this case?
- C** A. Yes.
- Q. The Horizon system has a help desk, does it not?
- A. It does.
- Q. The purpose of the help desk is what?
- D** A. As and when a postmaster or post office has any problems or technical queries or needs some help and advice and guidance they will ring a number which puts them through to the Horizon help desk.
- E** Q. The enquiry at the help desk, does it record it in some way?
- A. Yes. A call would be raised and a number, a reference number will be given for every call that is put to them.
- F** Q. Are the details of the enquiry stored in any way?
- A. Yes, they are. They are kept in the archive. They are kept in a data store somewhere.
- G** Q. In order to complete your witness statements you have looked into the data store, have you not?
- H** A. What I have basically done is I was requested to supply all calls logged in one data and another for that particular post office and supply the information, all the transaction details of those calls as evidence, yes.

A

Q. So you have looked at the data, have you not, for all calls to the helpline from the West Byfleet branch?

B

A. I have had a look over every call, yes. It is not my – I am not someone who can completely and technically understand and describe every call's details but I have generated a number of these witness statements before and seen numerous calls so ---

C

Q. You are able to translate to an extent the jargon you see on the computer screen, are you?

A. Yes, yes.

D

Q. I think you have initially looked at all the calls between June 30th 2005 and January 14th 2008?

A. Initially, yes.

E

MR TATFORD: I am going to ask you about those first of all. Your Honour, I have discussed with Mr Hadrill whether the witness can use his witness statement. It is very detailed evidence and I don't think there is any difficulty at all.

JUDGE STEWART: Yes. Have you got a copy there? It looks as though you have.

F

A. Yes, I have

JUDGE STEWART: Good.

G

MR TATFORD: I am looking at your witness statement dated 29th January 2010, I think the second one you completed.

A. Yeah.

H

Q. Perhaps if you look at the second page of that, there were how many calls from West Byfleet in that period, June 2005 to January 14th 2008 – the second page.

A. Yes, sorry, 107 calls.

Q. The statement I am referring to is dated 29th January 2010.

A

A. Oh, right, 29th January 2010?

Q. Yes.

A. Sorry, 135 calls.

B

MR TATFORD: So there were 135 calls to the helpline between June 30th 2005 and January 14th 2008? Is that right?

A. June 30th 2005 and on that statement December 31st 2009 on that statement.

C

JUDGE STEWART: Can you let me see what you are looking at, please, Mr Dunks? Let the usher take it from you and hand it to me. (handed to his Honour) Thank you.

A. Dated 29th March 2010?

D

MR TATFORD: Could I just have a look at the statements you have got, please, Mr Dunks?

A. Sorry.

MR TATFORD: Let us just check we are looking at the right ones.

E

A. This one is dated March 2010. (handed to counsel)

JUDGE STEWART: It looks as though this might be an earlier draft or something of what was eventually supplied because it is different from what we have here.

F

A. I have had numerous requests and they were added on.

MR TATFORD: I am going to pass up to you a bundle of witness statements, please. I only want you to look at your witness statements.

G

A. Yeah.

Q. But I am turning to page 18 which is the final form of a statement dated 29th January and perhaps you could just use that document? Mr Dunks, put the witness statements you brought in to one side.

H

A. Okay.

A

Q. Then let us just use the bundle that we all have. (handed) So you can see there is a handwritten "page 18" at the bottom. Yes?

A. Yeah.

B

Q. Turn over the page. The second paragraph, can you just tell us how many calls there were, please, between June 30th 2005 and January 14th 2008?

A. And January 14th, yeah. There were 135 calls.

C

Q. 135 calls. Thank you. You have actually set out on a number of pages after that the details of all the calls?

A. Yes.

D

Q. The calls, you yourself, did you have any involvement in any of those calls?

A. No, none at all.

E

Q. So what you have simply done is looked at the data and set it out in a witness statement?

A. Yes.

F

Q. 135 calls over that period, that equates to how many calls a month?

A. From my statement it is between three and four calls a month.

G

Q. Is that anything unusual?

A. No, not really, not for across the whole estate(?) and other statements I have submitted, it is not out of the ordinary.

H

Q. So not out of the ordinary, and the nature of the calls, can you summarise it in a sentence, please, and then we will look at some of the calls?

A. Most of the calls are to do with printer failures, bar code readers. 85%, 90% of them are to do with hardware faults like that.

Q. Do any of the calls strike you as particularly unusual?

A

A. No.

B

Q. I hope it assists if I don't go through with you every single call because it may take a little time, but take the second call. Could you tell us the second call, what the nature of that was?

C

A. I mean, what I have done here I have copied or put in the opening line of the call so it gives a rough idea of the call, what it was about, and then the resolution line as well.

Q. All right. So what was the call about on 29th July 2005 at 1747?

D

A. Basically the call logger has written down "no power to Horizon" and the closing resolution line says "call closed by Jason Rogers. CC states that has a frozen screen whilst doing a transaction. Reboot required. Reference offered."

E

Q. What was the outcome?

A. The system had frozen and resolved by a reboot.

MR TATFORD: So putting that together, there was a query to the helpline "there is no power to Horizon" and it was solved by ---

JUDGE STEWART: Turning it off and starting again?

F

A. Yes, basically.

MR TATFORD: Yes, absolutely. Thank you, your Honour. (to the witness) I am just going to the bottom of that page. I think the fourth call you recall, 15th September 2005, 1744, what was that call about?

G

A. Reading from, it says "PM", "postmaster states that the BOP", which stands for "back office printer", "is printing faintly and has changed toner and it is only a bit better."

H

So the outcome basically was that the postmaster was advised to order a new part for the printer.

A

Q. In fact as you have said, a very large amount of these calls are about the printer at West Byfleet?

A. The printer and bar code readers, yeah.

B

Q. Moving on, I am just going to take examples. You may be asked about any of these, but just so we have a flavour of it, call 13 on Friday 14th October, page 22 in that bundle.

C

A. Yes.

Q. So Friday 14th October at 11.40, what was that call about?

A. It states the FAD(?) which is a short, the code number for the Post Office, "none polling. Please investigate."

D

Q. What does that mean?

A. "None polling" is a term that we use for a lost communication with the Horizon system, and the outcome: "PM states there was a power cut. Counter was rebooted and the network restored."

E

Q. Anything particularly unusual about a power cut?

A. No.

F

Q. Do you see call 15 at the bottom of that page and then it goes over to the next page?

A. Yes.

G

Q. Call 15, 5th November 2005 at 1001 in the morning, what was that call about?

A. "PM states that the touch screen is not responding."

H

Q. So this is the screen one touches where you put your finger on the screen and it makes the system work in that way ---

A. Yes.

- A**
- Q. --- rather than having to key it in on a keyboard?
- A. Yes.
- Q. So the person who rings up says “the touch screen isn’t working”, and so what happened?
- B**
- A. The outcome was that they cleaned the touch screen and re-calibrated.
- Q. What does “re-calibrated” mean?
- A. I don’t know how the processes are but ---
- C**
- Q. What does it mean in layman’s terms?
- A. It is re-set from ---
- Q. So the screen is re-set?
- D**
- A. Yes.
- Q. Does that require turning the computer off or you don’t know?
- A. I don’t know.
- E**
- Q. All right.
- A. These are basically, the advice and guide, these are advice and guidance to the postmaster, are given by the person on the other end of the phone at the help desk.
- F**
- Q. So this is a short summary in fact of a conversation that would have taken place over the telephone?
- A. Yes.
- G**
- Q. Does the person who is on the helpline, are they typing in a record as they are involved in the call?
- A. Yes, they are.
- H**
- Q. So anything particularly unusual about that call?
- A. No.

A

Q. I want to now ask you to turn to page 24. There is a call, call number 25, 20th February 2006 at 10.42. What was the postmaster stating that the problem was?

B

A. Right. "The postmaster states that showing £6,000 down from balance." Things like that are then passed on to the NBSC which is the Post Office, so Fujitsu no longer have any dealings with that call.

C

Q. I see. So the call there was about being 6,000 down from the balance?

A. Yes.

Q. Anything particularly unusual about that sort of call?

D

A. No, no. Well, apart from the sort of amounts and things like that, but, no, there is always calls that need advice and guidance which are automatically passed to the NBSC.

Q. In fact there were a number of calls about being down at this time, were there not?

E

A. Yes.

Q. For example, on 21st February at 12.45 "the postmaster stated that the system is showing her as being down every day. She has been advised by NBSC and the postmaster was advised to follow the advice."

F

A. Yes.

Q. And 23rd February 2006 at 8.59, another call on this topic. "The postmaster was getting discrepancies. They have been investigated and the postmaster has been advised that the NBSC will take a second look at this as the office stock units appear to be in a mess."

G

A. That is what it says, yes.

Q. Is there any record in the following calls as to how this was all resolved?

H

A. No. Once it is passed to the NBSC which is the Post Office, Fujitsu are no longer involved.

A

Q. Moving on from the calls in relation to that issue in February 2006, the calls that follow, again are they routine matters as you understand it?

B

A. In my opinion, yes. There is nothing out of the ordinary call wise that I have not seen before.

C

Q. Many of the calls are about the printer. Would that be right?

A. Yes, or any issues.

Q. And the bar code reader as well?

A. Mmm mm.

D

Q. The calls continue on into 2007. Again routine enquiries or anything that strikes you as unusual?

A. Nothing out of the ordinary that call-wise I had not seen before in one way or another.

E

Q. Is there any further reference in these calls to some kind of deficiency, the money being down in some way?

A. Without going through them again I don't know every call.

F

Q. All right. I am sure if there are any important calls you will be taken to them.

(Pause) I am sorry. I am just checking on matters. Just give me a moment, please. I am sorry, your Honour. (Pause) So, as I say, if there are other important calls that you need to be asked about I am sure you will. I think you also made a further statement. Could you turn to page 100 in that bundle? I think, looking at page 101 now, you also looked at calls to the helpline before 30th June 2005. Is that right?

G

A. Yes.

H

Q. You looked at calls during the period 1st January 2005 to June 30th 2005?

A. Yes.

A

Q. I think you found thirteen calls?

A. Mmm mm.

Q. Again what was the nature of the calls, just in a sentence?

B

A. Routine printer's, all of them are to do with the printer problems.

Q. So nothing out of the ordinary in that period?

A. No.

C

MR TATFORD: I am so sorry. I had not seen the time. I have no further questions. Thank you.

JUDGE STEWART: Do you have cross-examination, Mr Hadrill?

D

MR HADRILL: I do have, yes.

JUDGE STEWART: That will have to be at five past two I am afraid, Mr Dunks. I am sorry about that.

E

A. Okay. That is fine.

JUDGE STEWART: In the meantime, Mr Tatford, will you just check, please, the statement as to how many calls there were up to 14th January 2008 because from my reading of this statement it looks as though the 135 figure, that includes calls after that date.

F

MR TATFORD: I will check that. Thank you.

JUDGE STEWART: Five past two if you would, please, then. Thank you. Don't discuss the case in the meantime, please. Thank you.

G

(Adjourned for a short time)

(In the absence of the jury)

H

MR HADRILL: Your Honour, I anticipate Mr Dunks will be about another half an hour and then we can if you so wish start the technical expert Mr Jenkins. Can I say for the reasons I

A expressed this morning I am beginning to wane a bit and I would be grateful if we didn't necessarily start any fresh witness this afternoon. I am entirely in your Honour's hands.

JUDGE STEWART: We will see how we get on.

B MR HADRILL: Thank you.

(Jury return to court)

ANDREW DUNKS (continued)

Examined by MR TATFORD:

C MR TATFORD: Your Honour, can I just ask Mr Dunks some further questions to clarify a matter that there may have been an error this morning?

JUDGE STEWART: Yes.

D MR TATFORD: Mr Dunks, could I just ask you to have a look at page 41 in that statement bundle, please?

A. Yes.

E Q. You have listed and given a number to each call. You have said that it was 135 calls in the period up to 15th January 2008. In fact do you want to just look at page 41? Call number 105 is dated, is it not, 17th December 2007?

F A. Yes.

Q. There the description of the call is "PM states CP on no 2 is not working."

A. Yes.

G Q. Can you help us as to what that means?

A. "CP" is "counter printer" and "no 2" will be counter 2.

Q. So another problem with the printer it would appear?

H A. Yes.

A

Q. That in fact is the last call by the postmaster in the period that we are concerned with. Is that not right? Call 106 for 14th January 2008 refers to an auditor, Keith Noverre. Is that right?

B

A. Yes.

C

Q. Then you do list calls going into 2008 which do in the end add up to 135, but in fact looking strictly at the period you were asked to look at, the last call is number 105 from the postmaster in that period you were asked to look at. Would that be right?

A. Yes. It is actually, yes.

Q. So it is not 135. 105 calls to the helpline in that period?

D

A. Mmm mm.

MR TATFORD: Thank you. Could you remain there, please?

Cross-examined by MR HADRILL:

E

Q. Mr Dunks, the understanding I have is this. You are employed by Fujitsu and you are nominated in effect to extract data held on their systems?

A. Yes.

F

Q. So you have a job that if somebody phones up saying "I would like to get some archived information" the desk they would go to or the person they would go to is you?

A. It is one of my roles, yes.

G

Q. So then you would have permission with Fujitsu and presumably the Post Office to access their archived event data and then to print off?

A. I would actually log a call for support people to track that data and send it to me.

H

Q. Right. So basically what you do, you are the person that receives the call?

A. Yes.

A

Q. And somebody who is making enquiries says “we would like data event call or transaction logs or some logs for a certain period of time for a certain post office. Can you supply?”

B

A. Yes.

C

Q. You don't go off and press the buttons but you then, as it were, delegate somebody in the technical department to go and get the information that has been requested?

A. With regard to these help desk calls, yes.

D

Q. Yes. You are the point of contact, as it were, to make sure that it is obtained and sent?

E

A. Yes.

Q. You therefore have no technical understanding of the aspect of these calls or any particular post office, do you?

F

A. No, not in depth technical knowledge, no.

Q. All you are here is effectively to be a witness to produce the documents and as to that they come from Fujitsu?

G

A. Yes.

Q. So I cannot ask you any technical calls. All you can say is what is in these messages, but you didn't put the entries there. You have just effectively been sent as the messenger to say “this is our printout?”

H

A. Yes.

Q. The helpline, this data contains Fujitsu information, does it not?

A. Mmm mm.

A

Q. It does not contain information of a post office master or mistress phoning direct Chesterfield, does it?

A. No.

B

Q. So if somebody was phoning a helpline for financial purposes or just phoning the financial centre of Chesterfield it would not be contained in this information?

A. No, it will not.

C

Q. So there could be a vast number of calls in regard of financial aspects with Chesterfield which are not in this log?

A. I would not know.

D

Q. You just would not know because effectively you have got the printout from Fujitsu?

A. Yes.

E

Q. If I can just go through the log and not to trouble you hopefully for too long, if we look at number 8, I think it is page – I have been helpfully provided with a bundle that is paginated but it does not have the same pagination as I originally had but ---

A. 21?

F

MR HADRILL: Page 21. Can I just rely upon the call numbers? Here it is a call on Friday 23rd September 2005 at 5.32 p.m. "P.m. postmaster states her power went down, is getting power company to sort out" and then we get the next one, number 9, 24th September 09, "post office closed due to flood."

G

JUDGE STEWART: 24th September 05.

H

MR HADRILL: 24th September 05. So clearly the post office has been closed but it is going to re-open again on the 27th, 05.

JUDGE STEWART: Flooding, yes.

A

MR HADRILL: (to the witness) So it is shut for a short period of time because of flood damage?

A. It would appear so, yes.

B

Q. Then number 12, it says there "OSP for Seema Misra, PM." So Seema Misra, postmistress. Do you know what an "OSP" is?

A. "One shot password."

C

Q. "One shot password?"

A. Yes.

D

Q. What happens is that if an audit team turn up from the Post Office they will phone Horizon, Fujitsu ---

A. Yes.

E

Q. --- saying "can you give us a one shot password to allow them to access the memory or information contained on that West Byfleet post office."

A. To login, yes.

Q. To login?

F

A. Yeah.

G

Q. We know that happened on 14th January 2008 because we have heard from a Mr Noverre who said that he phoned I presume it is Fujitsu or whatever and got a one shot password. This is allowing an audit team on Thursday 6th October 2005 to have a password to enter the data contained on the Horizon system for that post office?

A. Mmm mm.

H

Q. Then we get lots of hardware problems, the pad not working, the printer. If we can look at number 15, "PM, postmaster" – this is 5th November 2005 at 9.57 in the

A

morning – when it says “call close by” and then it gives a name, Matthew Wilson, what does it mean by “call close?”

A. That should be “call closed.”

B

Q. That should be “closed”, should it?

A. Yes.

Q. Then it just keeps coming up as “call close” all the way through this.

C

A. Okay. That is possibly ---

Q. The machine does not put a “D” on the “closed.”

A. I don’t know why that is, no.

D

MR HADRILL: It is not down to you but ---

JUDGE STEWART: It could be a bit of computer programmer’s jargon, could it not?

A. Quite possibly they make ---

E

MR HADRILL: Anyway it talks about “touch screen not working. Cleaned touch screen and re-calibrated screen now working.” That does not involve you re-calibrating the screen, does it?

A. Not at all, no.

F

Q. Do you know what it actually means or what is involved?

A. No, I don’t.

G

Q. Fair enough. Number 17, 16th November 2005. “PM, postmistress states he has discrepancy on system.” Presumably it should be “she.” Then we get “call close by Akram Ali. PM states the discrepancy on system. Advised PM to call the NBSC.” So the NBSC is?

H

A. The Post Office.

Q. Chesterfield?

A. Yes.

- A** Q. So saying “it is not our problem. Go and phone the Post Office?”
- A. Yes.
- B** Q. In fact you assist or somebody assists the call passed on to the NBSC, so the call is passed on to Chesterfield because it has got nothing to do with you?
- A. No, it has not. That is right.
- C** Q. And nothing else is put in there because there are no conversations between Fujitsu and the postmistress because it is not their problem?
- A. Yeah.
- D** Q. The only reason that Fujitsu has been phoned because the postmistress has said there is a discrepancy on the system and then she is told to phone the Post Office?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Because it is financial?
- E** A. Yes.
- Q. Then we get lots of other re-calibrations. Number 20, “failed re-calibration. Advised reboot.” Saturday 17th December 2005, it is number 23.
- F** A. Yeah.
- Q. There is a problem here, “Swiss francs given to colleague. Tried to transfer and not in dropdown list.” Do you know what a dropdown list is?
- G** A. I can only hypothesise that ---
- Q. I don’t want you to guess.
- A. No, no. No, I don’t.
- H** Q. 10th January 06, number 24, “PM has rebooted to clear a network failure.” We don’t know what that is, do we?
- A. Again I will only assume.

A

Q. Don't assume, please. Number 25, 20th February 2006 at 10.42 hours, "PM ---" – that is the postmistress or master – "--- states that showing 6,000 down from balance." This call is closed by Joanne. "PM states that showing 6,000 down from balance" and your assistant whoever, Joanne Roben(?), says "advised it is an NBSC Chesterfield issue. Call them."

B

A. Yes.

C

Q. So what in fact it would appear that she sometimes on odd occasions either phoned Fujitsu by mistake when she should have contacted Chesterfield?

A. I can't, I don't know.

D

Q. You cannot comment?

A. No.

E

Q. Then "call outcome, call passed to NBSC." That is Chesterfield. It phones back saying, your entry number 26, "PM states that showing 6,000 down from balance", again told by Fujitsu it is an NBSC issue. "The postmistress states she has been talking to the NBSC and got cut off." Again you assist by transferring the call to Chesterfield?

F

A. Mmm mm.

G

Q. There seems to be obviously a lot of transfers on that day when she is phoning up complaining and gets through to Fujitsu and then is transferred to Chesterfield. Then number 28, 21st February 06, "PM ---" – postmistress or postmaster, it is just general, "PM" – "--- states that the last couple of weeks they have had problems with the Horizon kit and it is always showing that they are down in money." Yes?

H

A. Yes.

Q. So she is telling somebody in Fujitsu here, and it is obvious she has been talking to Chesterfield prior to this, complaining about losses and problems. Yes?

A

A. Yes.

B

Q. So February 06 we have a call logged on 21st February 2006. "PM states the last couple of weeks they have had problems with the Horizon kit and is always showing that they are down in money. PM stated the system is showing her as being down every day. She has been advised by NBC ---" – that is Chesterfield – "--- to speak to you to follow it up." Yes?

C

A. Yeah.

D

Q. It apparently means to say this, that she is speaking to Chesterfield about financial problems, and what you have got recorded there, not you personally, but Chesterfield are saying "it is nothing to do with us. You speak to Fujitsu."

E

A. Well, that is not my interpretation of it.

Q. What is your interpretation?

A. "The call closed by Samantha (inaudible) PM states that the system has been showing her as being down every day. She has been advised by the NBSC. Advised PM to follow this", I would assume their advice.

F

MR HADRILL: But she has obviously complained to you as well?

A. Well, she has logged a call with our help desk. That is what she has done.

JUDGE STEWART: And "REF?"

G

A. "Reference offered", reference number I am assuming. That is generally ---

JUDGE STEWART: So each of these call records has a reference number?

A. Yes. The ones involved call the 0622.

H

MR HADRILL: Thursday 23rd February 2006 at 8.59 hours. "Annette, NBSC." What is that?

A. Again I am assuming it is someone within the NBSC.

- A** Q. So it is a call coming from Chesterfield, is it, to you? (Pause) You cannot help? It says "Annette, NBS ---"
- A. No. I don't know the complete, all the details of every call so I would not know the scenario.
- B** Q. No. You have just been sent along to read this out?
- A. No, not read it out. As I say, I don't know all the details of the calls, no.
- C** Q. It says "Annette, NBSC. PM states that she has losses every week in two stock units." So it seems like Chesterfield is complaining to you that they are being complained at by Mrs Misra that there are problems?
- A. It could be that, yes.
- D** Q. "Call closed by David Dore(?) PM was getting discrepancies. SSC." What is SSC?
- A. It is our fourth line support.
- E** Q. Fourth line?
- A. I believe so, yes.
- F** Q. Let us just go ---
- A. I don't know. I know that they are a technical team within Fujitsu.
- G** Q. "PM was getting discrepancies. SSC have investigated and advised that the NBSC take a second look at this as the office stock units appear to be in a mess."
- A. That is what it says, yes.
- H** Q. So Chesterfield are saying "you need to look at this", and this is dated 23rd February 2006, because this post office, West Byfleet, the stock is in a mess?
- A. That is what it says, yes.
- Q. Clearly problems are apparent on 23rd February 2006?

A A. It says the office stock appears to be in a mess, yes.

Q. Yes, and clearly even the logs, there have been complaints by her for several weeks? Yes?

B A. If there are calls over several weeks stating that.

MR HADRILL: It starts I think ---

JUDGE STEWART: The last couple of weeks.

C MR HADRILL: The last couple of weeks. I do apologise, yes. I stand corrected. (to the witness) Then we get 31. Then we get the outcome, "SSC team advise that call be passed back to NBSC for fuller investigation." So the fourth line of investigation, what do you call it, the fourth tier or something?

D A. The fourth line.

Q. The fourth line. I think it starts off this, that the first line would be "phone up the helpline or whoever, Fujitsu, get the problem and say "have you tried turning your machine

E on? Is it a fuse" and stuff like that? It would be dealt with on the telephone?

A. Yes.

Q. The second line, "if it persists we will send an engineer out?"

F A. I believe so, yes.

Q. You don't know ---

A. I don't know.

G Q. I will not ask you then. Then 31, "PM states that the systems are slowing down during transactions and being told of the resolution. PM states they have a slow counter. After checking event advise PM to keep a record for future calls as there is no fault. PM

H happy." Then we get effectively 15th March 06, "PM states no cards are being taken on the Pin pad." This is all hardware, isn't it, to do with Fujitsu?

A

A. Yes.

B

Q. Then we get 36, a call on 24th March 06, 1726 hours, a bit of an odd call. It does not say who takes it – it does. It says “resolution closed by Nicky Law. Error on bureau transactions. Advised this is an NBSC issue” and she is transferred to Chesterfield?

C

A. That is what it says, yes.

Q. So basically she has phoned Fujitsu saying “there is something wrong with your equipment.” You say “it is not our equipment. You had better speak to NBSC?”

D

A. That is one interpretation of it.

Q. One interpretation of it. Then 38, 2nd May 06, 0502, “the critical alert received.” Is this something which is not a phone call but the computer system sends out a critical alert where you cannot help?

E

A. I know a bit about certain calls and things like that, but these are generally, yeah, I mean, it is raised at 4 or 5 o’clock in the morning so it is an automated.

F

Q. It is an automated?

A. Yes.

Q. As we go on it is all to do with base units, printers, Pin pads, referring her to a local electrician, re-calibration of the screen. Certainly number 51 is a re-calibration of the screen. That is 21st July 06.

G

A. Sorry?

Q. Number 51.

A. Yes.

H

Q. “The PM states the touch screen is faulty and it is re-calibrated.” That is 21st July. 25th July, number 52, “engineer replaces touch screen.” I presume that is second level, is it, when the engineer goes out to do something?

- A** A. Yes.
- Q. Then we get number 57, 5th October 2006, “caller states that mode two touch screens.” That is two ---
- B** A. Counter two.
- Q. “No 2 is not working.” I think we have just referred to that. Then it goes on with a complaint. 65, 15th January 07, “Pin pad again is not reading cards.”
- C** A. Yeah.
- Q. 65, that is 15th January 07, “Pin pad not reading cards.” The same day a bit later, “Pin pad installation failed. It has failed to read the next card.” So it is just general complaints of telling you the hardware is failing?
- D** A. Yes.
- Q. What I do ask you is because we have been told that obviously it goes up to number 105 because we can see there 107 and 106 is 14th January, 9.15 in the morning. We
- E** have got there “the OSP authorised by NSB”, that is Chesterfield, “for the auditor Keith Noverre” to have, as it were, a Pin to investigate?
- A. To be able to login, yes.
- F** Q. So that goes up to 14th January 2008. We know that another postmaster takes over thereafter because we heard from him, Mr Vasarmy. All right? You will not know that but I am telling you that. Then if we look at 112, this is 20th February 08. Actually shall we start
- G** on number 110 because this is 4th February 2008 and Mr Vasarmy is there now. “PM, postmaster, wanted help with a transaction. PM called him on transaction help. Have done checks and transferred him to NBSC.” That is Chesterfield, isn’t it?
- H** A. It is, yes.
- Q. So the postmaster has needed help on 4th February 2008. Yes?

- A** A. Help, advice, yes.
- Q. 20th February 08, 9.32 in the morning. “PM states he needs to do an AP.” What is an “AP reversal?”
- B** A. I know it is down to automated payment but I don’t know what it is.
- Q. He needs some help to do some transaction?
- A. Yes.
- C** Q. 112. Then underneath it says “PM needed to help with AP reversal. Transferred to NBSC.” Yes?
- A. Yes.
- D** Q. So even he is coming through to you sometimes with a complaint and it has just been transferred to Chesterfield?
- A. We get many calls like that, yes.
- E** Q. Can I ask you to look at 119, 26th July 2008? It is a voice call, so somebody has left a message presumably on your voicemail, and it is put down there this, “NBSC.” So someone has left a complaint with Fujitsu but the note says that really this is a Chesterfield issue, isn’t it?
- F** A. It would be, yes.
- Q. It says this: “One stock unit is showing £1,000 loss. Unable to find where it has disappeared to.”
- G** A. Yes.
- Q. So someone is complaining, presumably if it is July 08 complaining that £1,000 just does not disappear from his account?
- H** A. It appears that is what it says, yes.

A Q. And things are not going smoothly as possible perhaps. He is complaining that the thousand pounds has disappeared?

A. I could not say what the issue was.

B Q. And you are telling him or someone is telling him to phone Chesterfield. It is not your problem?

A. Yes.

C Q. Then again we get complaints of hardware failing, 121, this is 30th July 08. The counter was frozen, the note, the till.

A. Mmm mm.

D Q. 125, 18th August 08, "PM, postmaster, needs guidance on an AP reversal transaction" and how it is resolved: "Offered to transfer the postmaster back to NBSC. However, his office is too busy and he will call them later."

E A. That is what it says, yes.

Q. Then we get 127 which is 10th December 08 at 12.23. "PM has message on screen" because Horizon sends messages to the screens in post offices. Yes?

F A. Mmm mm, yes.

Q. "You are losing until the branch is rolled into the next trading period stock unit BB rolled into the current TP 42 days ago." So what does that mean?

G A. I have no idea. I don't know anything to do with that call.

Q. What is perhaps of interest is this, that 10.12.08, 12.53 hours, all right, it seems like the postmaster is asking for some information. Yes?

H A. Which call, sorry?

Q. Number 127.

A. Mmm mm.

A

Q. "Description. PM had an SU rollover." What does that mean?

A. "Stock unit."

Q. "A stock unit rollover error to do with trans archiving."

B

A. "Transaction archiving."

MR HADRILL: So there is a complaint being made by the postmaster there is a stock unit rollover error and it is to do with the trans archiving. What is that?

C

JUDGE STEWART: He just said, "transaction archiving."

MR HADRILL: Thank you. (to the witness) "Spoke to NBSC Chesterfield. No fault found with software. NBSC think the PM has rolled the stock unit early system, is saying that some transactions have already been archived." So what does that mean, "have already been archived?"

D

A. I don't know.

E

Q. All right. But someone is complaining that you could not get the information back on the screen because it has gone, is that right, or the gist of it?

A. I could not say.

F

Q. Again on 29th January 09, number 130, "the postmaster has a transaction problem so he sent off to Chesterfield?"

A. Yes.

G

Q. That is all I really want to ask you. But basically this documentation shows that there are two helplines or two concerns. One is this which is Fujitsu dealing with the hardware. Yes?

H

A. Yes.

Q. There is another one with Chesterfield?

A. Yes.

A MR HADRILL: Thank you.

Re-examined by MR TATFORD:

B Q. The calls by the second sub-postmaster, and we are given the name Vasarmy, you have now been taken to the body of some more calls. Do you find anything in those calls out of the ordinary?

A. No. They are standard calls.

C Q. Keep your voice up, please. Standard calls?

A. Sorry. They are standard calls. There is nothing out of the ordinary on anything.

D Q. You were asked some questions about a loss, a £6,000 loss, some calls in February. I just wonder if we could get the time period clear? Could you look at call 25?

A. Yeah.

Q. That is the first call, is it, on this issue?

E A. It appears to be, yes.

Q. So call 25, Monday 20th February 2006 at 10.42. "PM states that showing 6,000 down from balance."

F A. That is what it says, yes.

Q. There is another call on the same day, 20th February, "PM states showing 6,000 down from balance."

G A. Yes.

Q. Two more calls on 20th February, so a total of four calls ---

A. Three.

H Q. Three calls. I am sorry. It is a slightly confusing format. Three calls on 20th February about this issue. Then there is the call on 21st February that you were referred to

A

by Mr Hadrill for the defendant on the same issue. That is 21st February. Then there is another call on 23rd February.

A. Yes.

B

Q. And the resolution is dated when, please?

A. The one for 23rd February?

Q. Yes.

C

A. The resolution is 3rd March.

Q. Yes, and the resolution says “call closed by David Dore. PM was getting discrepancies. SSC have investigated and advised that the NBSC take a second look at this as the office stock units appear to be in a mess.”

D

A. Yes.

Q. So that is the time period, calls at least, between the 20th and 23rd February, so three days?

E

A. Yes.

Q. And a last resolution date of 3rd March?

F

A. Yes.

Q. Then after that any further reference to this topic?

A. I don't believe there are any to do with the particular subject, that discrepancy.

G

Q. Could I ask you to turn to page 46? You were asked about a voicemail call actually, it is call number 119 on 26th July 2008, a voicemail message, and over the page at the top of page 46 in the statement bundle: “One stock unit is showing £1,000 loss, unable to find where it has disappeared to, close.”

H

A. Yeah.

Q. Just look through the calls after that. Is this an issue that is referred to again?

A

A. I don't believe that that particular is, no.

Q. So there was one voicemail message and is there a further call to the helpline about this problem?

B

A. No.

Q. Do these records help in every case? If a problem was raised in a help call is it always set out what the solution if any there was to that problem?

C

A. In a roundabout way. It depends on the wording of the person closing the call, yes. There is normally a repair code.

D

Q. Yes. But here in relation to that call 119 where the stock unit is said to be showing £1,000 loss, "unable to find where it has disappeared to" and the decision "advised to call the NBSC", there is no further call about that topic to the helpline?

E

A. No, there isn't.

Q. There is a heading before "advised to call NBSC, desk." Is that the description?

A. Yes, it is.

F

Q. So the record says that the postmaster was advised to call the NBSC. Does the record show anywhere whether the problem was solved or not?

A. Not on these calls, no.

Q. But there is no further call to the helpline about this?

G

A. No, there isn't.

MR TATFORD: Thank you. Does your Honour have any questions for the witness?

JUDGE STEWART: No, thank you.

H

MR TATFORD: Might he be released then?

JUDGE STEWART: Thank you very much for coming. That is it for now. Thank you very much.

A. Okay. Thank you.

(witness withdrew)

JUDGE STEWART: Mr Tatford, what is the next stage in the prosecution case?

MR TATFORD: The next stage is for the prosecution's expert witness, Mr Gareth Jenkins, to give evidence.

JUDGE STEWART: Is there any other evidence that the prosecution are calling?

MR TATFORD: There is a little further evidence, but the order I have discussed with Mr Hadrill is that it would be better for the further evidence which essentially is from the investigator who is in charge of the overall investigation, we have discussed it may be preferable to leave that until last just in case further issues are raised for Mr Jenkins.

JUDGE STEWART: So it is a little bit of tidying up at the end, as it were?

MR TATFORD: Yes, precisely.

JUDGE STEWART: Earlier today I was informed about a problem that arose after we rose yesterday. I hope Mr Hadrill will not mind if I just tell you this much, that it is the sudden death of somebody known to Mr Hadrill and it interrupted his preparations for the next stage of the trial overnight, and he has asked me if we could delay starting on this next important witness obviously today because of all that. In fairness to him and indeed to Mrs Misra I am going to allow that. So I am sorry, but it is another short day. We are not using your time very efficiently I am afraid so far in this trial but I did say at the outset it is never possible to predict exactly what is going to happen and could this be a more graphic illustration of that? But Mr Hadrill, I am confident that you will be able to proceed at 10.15 tomorrow?

MR HADRILL: Yes, your Honour.

JUDGE STEWART: There it is. 10.15 tomorrow. (Court adjourned)