

Summary of Tape Recorded Interview



Person Interviewed Hughie Noel Thomas
Place of Interview Interview Room
Holyhead Police Station
Anglesey
Date of Interview 13th October 2005

Exhibit No:
Number of pages:

Signature of
interviewing officer

Time 19.52 hours Time 20.36
commenced concluded
Duration of 46 minutes Tape 37924
interview reference no

Interviewing Officer(s) Diane Matthews Steve Bradshaw

Other persons present Mr Eilian Williams Solicitor

Tape counter times	Person speaking	Text
0.00	DM	Introductions were made. Mr Thomas was recautioned. Mr Williams was happy that his client fully understood the meaning of the caution. It was explained that the reason for the interview was surrounding the audit shortage of £48,454.87, which had been completed on the morning of 13th October 2005 at Gaerwen Post Office. A recap of the days events was captured in my notebook which was read out to Mr Thomas. Mr Thomas agreed that this was an accurate account of events.

Record of Tape Recorded Interview (continued)

Tape counter times	Person speaking	Text
3.37	HT	The only comment I will make is that I was prepared to make an interview at home, but probably I misunderstood but you may correct me, but you went and phoned someone to ask that, and I wanted Jim Evans, my Federation Representative and who has taken over the office in my absence, and from what I understood, and maybe you can correct me, that you weren't happy to do that.
	DM	What happened was, like we explained to you when we arrived at your office, there were several avenues open to us. One was a voluntary taped interview, the other one, because of the amount involved was to involve the police. We had to take one of them options because we would rather sort this out sooner rather than later
	HT	I agree with you.
	SB	Are you happy with the reason why we are in here today and the reason we are in Holyhead Police Station?
5.07	HT	I understand
	DM	Ok so the audit took place and it produced the shortage as we said of just over £48,000. Do you want to give us an explanation of why there is that much short in your accounts
	HT	At the moment I am not commenting. No comment
	SB	Do you know when the account was first short

Record of Tape Recorded Interview (continued)

Tape counter times	Person speaking	Text
6.21	HT	Without looking through the papers I don't. I'm sorry
	SB	Without looking at what papers?
	HT	The accounting papers
	SB	I understand your right to no comment but we have some cash accounts
	HT	Yeah not saying, I am finding it very difficult to remember what really went on a fortnight ago, let alone, there are 29 weeks gone in this year and without having the evidence in front of me and looking at it in bare figures. I am an old fashioned chap, im used to figures on paper not on a screen.
	DM	Did you keep any other paperwork at home to do with these losses
	HT	No everything is there. Everything you got or within the office is in the office
	DM	Because all we have taken from the office at this point is the cash accounts.
	HT	All the paperwork is there, everything is there with the weeks on everything. I wrap them up and what I cant keep in the office is in the shed.
	DM	That's the daily and weekly work
	HT	Yes
	DM	Right but with regard to this loss was this money if we say it built up over a period of time

Record of Tape Recorded Interview (continued)

Tape counter times	Person speaking	Text
8.04	HT	Yes
	DM	I understand that you cant say to us that 12 months ago it was £200 short and I know there was £21,000 locked up in the safe. I fully understand that you are not going to remember that, but did you keep any records of your own to say well this week I am £200
	HT	No
	DM	Right so the only records you have got are 1) in your daily and weekly envelope and 2) the records which have been made on your cash account.
	HT	Yes, I have got no hidden agenda
	DM	Right so when we look at your cash accounts do you declare or do you show on your accounts accurately the state of your office in any particular week.
	HT	Well I cant comment really on that.
	SB	Do you understand your obligations as a subpostmaster regarding office surplus's and shortages
	HT	Yes
	SB	Do you like to explain what that obligation is
	HT	To make good any loss and take out any extra.
	SB	Ok and when was that to be made good
	HT	Sorry is it this loss your talking about now
	SB	No no any loss
	HT	Within the week or on that day as far as I can think of

Record of Tape Recorded Interview (continued)

Tape counter times	Person speaking	Text
	SB	Ok so when you balance for the benefit of Mr Williams now , the cash account week runs Thursday to a Wednesday, with you balancing on a Wednesday. You show a shortage of £10, you are obliged by the terms of your contract to make good that shortage
	HT	Yes
	SB	When you have been doing these cash accounts whether it be for the last 6 months, 18 months or 2 years, are there any occasions when you haven't made good these shortages
	HT	No Comment
	SB	Do you know when you started having shortages within the Post Office
	HT	Without looking back im not quite sure
	SB	Have you ever made any of these shortages good
	HT	I have tried to
	SB	What do you mean by I have tried to
	HT	Whenever possible yes
	SB	Do you know which losses you have made good
	HT	Without looking back at the papers no
	SB	Any losses that you haven't made good did you know it was wrong to do that
	HT	No
	SB	Would you like to explain why you didn't think it was

Record of Tape Recorded Interview (continued)

Tape counter times	Person speaking	Text
		wrong not to make good the loss when I would like to remind you already explained to me that you understood the terms of your contract
	HT	Yes I know
	SB	You had to make good the loss for that week
	HT	No comment
	SB	So you are declining to comment on why you thought it was ok not to make good the shortages
	HT	Yes
	SB	The loss is £48,000 in cash and if I just use your last balance which would have been completed yesterday Wednesday 12 th October
	HT	Yes
	SB	There was a shortage of £48,000 in cash and a couple of hundred pounds, the rest of the loss is made up with discrepancies within the stock. When that shortage was discovered, did you make good that shortage
	HT	No
	SB	What did you do with that cash figure for that week 29.
	HT	No comment
	SB	Did you inflate the cash for that week
	HT	No comment
	SB	If as is transpired from the audit today, you said there was in excess of £69,000 in the safe when in fact there

Record of Tape Recorded Interview (continued)

Tape counter times	Person speaking	Text
		was only £21,000. Do you have any explanation of why there is £48,000 short
	HT	No Comment
	SB	The previous week is it £48,000 short
	HT	No Comment
	SB	If we go through weeks 1 to week 29 of the current cash account year 05/06 are any of them cash accounts a true record of the cash declared when you have balanced the office accounts each and every week.
	HT	No comment
	SB	For cash account year 04/05 which is 52 cash accounts on each and every Wednesday when you have balanced the accounts is that a true record of the cash locked up.
	HT	No comment
	SB	Who is responsible for doing the cash accounts
	HT	I am
	SB	Who signs the cash accounts
	HT	I do
	SB	So if the cash locked up is not a true record, will you be responsible
	HT	No comment
12.22	SB	Who else works in the post office
	HT	Im not going to, myself
	SB	Now you have just said im not going to then myself

Record of Tape Recorded Interview (continued)

Tape counter times	Person speaking	Text
	HT	Myself yes
	SB	Is there anybody else who works in the post office
	HT	Just myself
	SB	Does anyone else have access to the Horizon machines
	HT	Just my wife
	SB	Does anyone else have a password or a user identity
	HT	No
	SB	Does your son or daughter have a user identity
	HT	No
	SB	So if I took the user summary of the Horizon machine, I would only find yourself and your wife, not your son or daughter
	HT	No
	SB	Has your son or daughter every worked behind the counter
	HT	No
	SB	Do they have access to the counter
	HT	Only when they bring me a cup of tea
	SB	Who secures the money of a night
	HT	I do
	SB	Who declares the money of a night
	HT	I do
	SB	Each night when you declare the figures do you send a true record

Record of Tape Recorded Interview (continued)

Tape counter times	Person speaking	Text
14.03	HT	No comment
	SB	On a Wednesday you have to declare your balance figure and the ONCH figure, are they always the same
	HT	No comment
	DM	Is there any occasion over the last 12 months that you have been on holiday
	HT	I haven't had a holiday for 12 years
	DM	So every Wednesday for the last 2 years you personally have completed the cash account
	HT	Yes
	DM	So every document if we check for the last 2 years it will be your signature on them
	HT	Yes
	DM	And nobody else has worked in your office
	HT	Only my wife
	DM	Has your wife ever completed the balance
	HT	No she cant, she can only do basic work and serve
	DM	Has she ever declared the cash
14.51	HT	No
	DM	Have you ever stolen money out of the Post Office
	HT	No
	DM	Have you stolen £48,000 of Post Office funds
	HT	No comment
	SB	So this £48,000, I believe you are selling the office

Record of Tape Recorded Interview (continued)

Tape counter times	Person speaking	Text
	HT	Yes
	SB	So if today was the transfer and not the audit, would the auditors still have found it £48,000 short
	HT	No comment
	SB	Have you got a buyer for the office
	HT	Yes
	SB	So you have got a buyer so you would expect to hand over in a relatively short period of time
	HT	Yes
	SB	What when you have checked and the £48,000 is missing, what would you say to the buyer, what's your explanation about the account being short
	HT	No comment
	DM	Were you hoping to repay that money prior to the transfer of the office to the new people
	HT	No comment
	DM	Are you aware that when an office transfers it will be subjected to a full cash and stock verification audit in order to transfer it over to the new people
	HT	Yes
	DM	So were you making provision to put that money back prior to the transfer in order that that transaction, the sale of your business would go ahead
	HT	No comment

Record of Tape Recorded Interview (continued)

Tape counter times	Person speaking	Text
17.09	DM	Are you aware that the sale of and the transfer of the business would not go ahead if the money wasn't there
	HT	No
	DM	So if you weren't aware it wouldn't go ahead, what do you think would happen
	HT	No idea
	DM	Had you thought about that or had you not considered that yet
	HT	No
	SB	You have already said to Diane that you have not stolen the money, so therefore, losses have occurred for whatever reason, we appreciate you cant tell me, we know the finishing time was yesterday, you cant remember when you first started having losses which you didn't make good or which ones you didn't make good, is there any reason why you think you were having losses in the office
	HT	Basic mistakes on the Horizon and not understanding it
	SB	Ok you say basic mistakes on the Horizon
	HT	If you check my error notices you will find out, that's all I will say at the moment The error notices received recently into the office were discussed with the most recent one being in the last couple of weeks

Record of Tape Recorded Interview (continued)

Tape counter times	Person speaking	Text
19.00	DM	When you said you had a £1500 error notice which you think Could be a payment of £15 that you have entered incorrectly, when you got that error notice, did you have a corresponding loss or gain showing in your account for that
	HT	No
	DM	Why wouldn't you have a corresponding loss or gain
	HT	No comment
	DM	Because if you have taken a premium bond of someone for £1500, in order to get the error notice, you have put the transaction through incorrectly, is that right
	HT	Yes
	DM	Therefore you are going to have a corresponding loss at the time of £1485 so when you get the error notice back for that amount back they match up is that have error notices work
	HT	Hopefully yes
	DM	You have a loss or a gain and somewhere down the line it is picked up and its brought to account and then you balance
	HT	Hopefully
	DM	Do you agree that's how the system is set up to work
	HT	Yes

Record of Tape Recorded Interview (continued)

Tape counter times	Person speaking	Text
22.06	DM	Do you agree that you should of shown a loss or gain in your cash account if that's correct way of doing it
	HT	No comment
		A further discussion took place around error notices
	SB	When was Horizon put into your office
	HT	Cant remember
	SB	If I say 2001 is that about right
	HT	You could be right yes
	SB	Because it is round about that period that 2 year period that it was implemented.
	HT	Yes without looking at the paperwork
	SB	So you've had 4 maybe 5 years of the Horizon system now while you say whatever you put in never came out the same way, did you ever in them days it was a retail line manager. Did you ever make any complaints to the retail line.
	HT	In the beginning yes
	SB	You say in the beginning but when was the beginning
	HT	When it first came in
	SB	So during 2001 you made some complaints about the Horizon system
	HT	Yes
	SB	What was done do you remember
	HT	I had to pay of the top of my head a certain sum which

Record of Tape Recorded Interview (continued)

Tape counter times	Person speaking	Text
		was only half of the loss POLC took the view that it was partly my fault and partly the Horizon fault. But there was a line manager available to talk to then, there isn't now.
	SB	So since then the teething problems with Horizon come in changing from one system to another with ecco or Richard Jackson.
	HT	I had my own, cant remember what it was called
	DM	Capture
	HT	Capture
	SB	So the old pen and paper was 20 years ago.
	HT	Yes
	SB	So while you are unsure of the horizon system did you request or get any extra training
	HT	Very little
	SB	By very little can you explain
	HT	I got one extra account on a Wednesday
	SB	And was that when horizon was first put in
	HT	Yes
	SB	So since 2001 what other complaints have you made if any
	HT	I rang the helpline on quite a few occasions regarding 2 or 3 small matters really. And that's all really but I have been rebooting ive got a list at home of the amount of times I have had to reboot over the last 12 months

Record of Tape Recorded Interview (continued)

Tape counter times	Person speaking	Text
25.19	SB	So if we check with the helpline they will have a list of calls from your office
	HT	I hope so yes I hope so. I haven't got it, I haven't unlocked it myself
	SB	These cash accounts and these shortages each week for whatever period it has gone on, which has accumulated to £48,000
	HT	Yes
	SB	Are you saying that the horizon system has contributed or is responsible for this discrepancy
	HT	All I am saying ive got very very doubts about it
	SB	While you have got your doubts about the Horizon system would you not agreed then or can you have any other explanation of why there is £48,000 short in the accounts if its not the horizon system
	HT	No
	SB	Have you given £48,000 out over the counter
	HT	Without checking and just being a basic man, I don't know
26.36	SB	If I use the example if I come in and get my pension book
	HT	When the pension books I had a docket, with horizon I have nothing till Wednesday. I may be talking too much now but when I have looked I have seen a lot of zeros coming up on the card accounts and the auditor this

Record of Tape Recorded Interview (continued)

Tape counter times	Person speaking	Text
	SB	morning couldn't explain it to me. I don't know what the zeros mean or if I have been paying out and it hasn't gone through the system. That is all I am prepared to say Again while you have brought it up about the zeros we may offer 1 or 2 explanations now. If I come in with my card, not a card account but the banks what's the most I can draw out
	HT	Im not sure it depends on the bank, some allow £200,
		Barclays do £300 because ive done a few and Lloyds do
		£250. Alliance & Leicester depends if that person has
		rang the bank up first and asked for a special withdrawal
	SB	Specials has got a phone audit
	HT	When I looked today there are 5 transactions with Lloyds
		that have a zero.
	SB	That wasn't every transaction though was it
	HT	No. Some of them went through but 5 were zero
	SB	And again we will check that out with the people at
		horizon. Get the equipment in the office checked.
		However, the explanation we believe why the zeros
		come up is that if I come and put my card into the pin
		pad and incorrectly enter my pin number it will tell you on
		the other side that I have incorrectly put my pin number
		in and I have to remove the card and redo it and it ends
		the transaction so that is actually a transaction at zero

Record of Tape Recorded Interview (continued)

Tape counter times	Person speaking	Text
	HT SB HT SB HT SB	money. Ok, The other one may be if I come in and ask to withdraw on a Post Office Card then I come in put my card in the pin pad, enter my pin number correctly and ask to take all the money out. I may not have any money in so that will come back as a zero. Now it is my opinion, and that's what I believe what the zeros are. I do not believe that the zeros contribute to the loss of the £48,000; however, we will check that out to ensure that what I am saying is correct. I would be very grateful So if you haven't give the money out over the counter to the customers, do you not agree then that for money to go missing from the Post Office it has to be someone that has access to the counter No Comment And if the money has been stolen from the Post office again its yourself, your wife who has the major access and your son and daughter you are the only 4 people who have access to the counter. Anybody else have any access to the counter No no Your responsible for the cash figures and you're the one who locks the money away in the safe at a night and puts the time locks on. And locks the stock away

Record of Tape Recorded Interview (continued)

Tape counter times	Person speaking	Text
31.27	HT	Yes yes
	SB	No other person
	HT	No
	SB	Can I just show you this docket then. This is the cash account week 29 week ending October 12 th 2005 and is your final cash account
	DM	DM1
	SB	Whos signature is on that
	HT	Mine
	SB	Your signature so you prepared this cash account. So on the bottom on the left hand side as you look there is a box for the declared surplus or shortage. Is there any amount declared
	HT	None
	SB	On the next page shows the cash declared which is £69,534.23. which you are saying there is that amount of cash in the safe. Is that a true record of the amount of cash locked up in the safe last night
	HT	Yes
	SB	So if I checked that safe last night I would of found £69,534.23
	HT	No comment
	SB	You have just said to me yes and now we are back to no comment

Record of Tape Recorded Interview (continued)

Tape counter times	Person speaking	Text
	HT	Yes
	SB	Is that a true record of the cash locked up
	HT	No comment
	SB	Did you inflate that cash
	HT	No comment
	SB	Did you know it was wrong to inflate that cash
	HT	No comment
	SB	Thereby inflating that cash you falsified the accounts for the post office for that week
	HT	No comment
	SB	Cash account 28 whos signature in the corner
	HT	Yes
	SB	Is that your signature
	HT	Yes
	SB	Again in the corner it shows a surplus or a shortage
	HT	Yes
	SB	96 pence surplus. Again the cash £70, 596.77. Is that a true account of the cash declared for that cash account week 5/10
	HT	No comment
	SB	Did you inflate that cash
	HT	Did you know it was wrong to inflate that cash
	SB	No comment
	SB	Thereby falsifying that document

Record of Tape Recorded Interview (continued)

Tape counter times	Person speaking	Text
34.09	HT	No comment
		The declared balances from week 27 to week 16 were shown which shown very small losses or gains until week 16.
	SB	In week 16, is that your signature in the corner
	HT	Yes
	SB	And at the bottom you see the shortage of £126.59
	HT	Yes
	SB	Did you make good that shortage that week
	HT	I cant remember
	SB	Again the cash locked up is £69,204.35 is that a true record of the cash locked up that week
	HT	No comment
	SB	Did you inflate the cash that week
	HT	No comment
	SB	Did you know it was wrong to inflate the cash that week
	HT	No comment
	SB	Thereby falsifying that document. Ok for the remaining 15, if I go through them individually is there any that you will remember
	HT	No not really
	SB	Is there any indication on any paperwork anywhere that will help us to help you to find out which one you may or may not of made good

Record of Tape Recorded Interview (continued)

Tape counter times	Person speaking	Text
36.27	HT	No
	SB	And you cant remember when you first experienced shortages in the office
	HT	No
	SB	Did you tell anyone you were experiencing shortages in the office
	HT	No one at all
	SB	You told nobody. Is there any reason you told nobody
	HT	I was too worried
	SB	Well if you are making mistakes why would you be too worried
	HT	I was
	SB	So this shortage is it one large or is it an accumulation of shortages over a period of time
	HT	I will say no comment to that at the moment
	SB	Cos what I am trying to get at is you said you told nobody because you were too worried but if it's a build of shortages after 2 or 3, you're an experienced subpostmaster as well as previous experience as a postman, you understand the workings of how the post office in all its guises of Consignia and post office of its importance of keeping true and accurate records. So you have other people there if you are experiencing difficulties with having shortages because £100 becomes £200

Record of Tape Recorded Interview (continued)

Tape counter times	Person speaking	Text
		becomes £300 it snowballs
	HT	If you call the helpline helpful I keep my comments
	SB	I understand that but again going back to the terms of your contract but ultimately all the shortages cost you.
	HT	Yes
	SB	Even genuine shortages cost you. The balance is there to help you, It's your safeguard. If your paying out too much money it will show up as a shortage. If that happens too much you should go and seek help. You are a member of the federation and your rep is the one who is working today as the interim. Did you not speak to him and say you are having problems
	HT	No
	SB	Do you not think that is the reason you join the federation
	HT	Could be
	SB	Was it one large loss that somebody has stolen from the Post Office
	HT	No
	SB	Do you suspect anybody else
	HT	No
	SB	So you don't suspect anyone else in your family
	HT	No No
	SB	So all your shortages and losses are attributed to yourself
	HT	If proven yes

Record of Tape Recorded Interview (continued)

Tape counter times	Person speaking	Text
39.42	SB	What do you mean proven, we know the office has a £48,000 loss that was there yesterday, that is a fact. At the audit when counted up £69,000 was not in the safe. So is that loss shortage discrepancy down to you
	HT	No comment
		Mr Williams stated that access to all accounting records would be made available. Access to his bank accounts was given. Forms were left to forward.
	SB	To recap then £48,000, have you stolen that money
	HT	No comment
	SB	Have you falsified any of the cash accounts in the last 6,12,18 months
	HT	No comment
	SB	Have you inflated the cash to enable to balance
	HT	No comment. I just hope you find something on the horizon system. And one thing I would like to say I have not had a holiday in 12 years
	SB	I have made a note of that
43.10	HT	And if you find anything wrong it is down to me and nobody else. I accept any responsibility once everything is cleared. That's my last comment
	SB	So you are taking full responsibility for the £48,000 audit shortage
	HT	Yes yes

Record of Tape Recorded Interview (continued)

Tape counter times	Person speaking	Text
	SB	Are you happy that the interview has been conducted according with pace
	AW	Yes im sure
	HT	I am happy as well. Thank you very much The tape seal 37924 was read and signed by Mr Thomas and signed by Mr Williams, Miss Matthews and Mr Bradshaw. The interview ended at 8.36