

Witness Statement

(CJ Act 1967, s9; MC Act 1980, ss 5A(3)(a) and 5B, MC Rules 1981, r 70)



Statement of Martin Drake

Age if under 18 Over 18 (If over 18 insert 'over 18')

This statement (consisting of three pages each signed by me) is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it anything which I know to be false or do not believe true.

Dated the 03 Day of January 2007

Signature M Drake

I am the person named above and have been employed by the Post Office for 27 years. I am currently employed as a Business Change Manager based in London.

I was the Business Change Manager responsible for managing communications to Post Office® branches including the distribution of training materials during the implementation of Branch Trading. Before Branch Trading every branch had balanced its accounts weekly. This was known as the Cash Account. Under Branch Trading branches are split into four groups (A, B C and D) that balance in different weeks. The implementation of Branch Trading did not change the way sub postmasters used Horizon (the computer system for Post Office® branches). Branch Trading did introduce some new procedures, some other activities previously carried out ceased and some Horizon buttons were given new names. The majority of procedures remained unchanged.

The change to Branch Trading took place between 5 October 2005 when branches in Group C completed their final Cash Account and 30 November 2005 when Group B branches completed their first Branch Trading Statement.

To assist branches in the change to Branch Trading, a Transition Guide, a Quick Reference Guide to new or changed procedures and a video or interactive CD-Rom giving an overview of Branch Trading were issued to branches 7-14 days before their final Cash Account. The number of items sent to each branch was based on the number of issues of Operational Focus (a weekly publication sent to branches to inform of changes to products and processes) sent to

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each branch. A videocassette or CD-ROM was sent to a branch based on records of preferred material maintained by Post Office Ltd.

Additionally the branch would have been sent one copy each of the Branch Trading Balancing and Reporting manuals and a Branch Trading Calendar. The calendar would show the dates relative to the end of each Branch Trading Period, thus informing the Postmaster of when to complete a Branch Trading statement. The calendar and transition guide were produced in bespoke colours for each group. The Transition Guide also stated the final Cash Account date and first Branch Trading statement date.

In the week of each group's final Cash Account and first Branch Trading Statement a Memoview (a message broadcast to branches via the Horizon system, similar to e mail) was sent to every branch to remind them to complete their final Cash Account or first Branch Trading Statement as appropriate.

I can see from business records that South Warnborough Sub Post Office Branch (SPOB), Branch Code 092 904 is listed in Group C for Branch Trading.

The following training material was posted to South Warnborough SPOB; one copy each of the training CD-ROM, the Quick Reference Guide and the Transition Guide and Branch Trading Calendar for Group C branches. The Transition Guide would have been a photocopy due to problems in producing a colour printed version. The branch would also have received copies of the Branch Trading Balancing and Report manuals. In addition, Memoviews were sent to Group C branches to advise them of the problems with the production of training materials (sent 26/09) and to remind them to complete a final Cash Account on 5 October (sent 30/09/05) and a first Branch Trading statement on 9 November (sent 03/11/05). Every Memoview included instructions to contact the Network Business Support Centre (NBSC) in the event of non-receipt of training material or if the message was not understood.

The NBSC is a helpline available to all Post Office® branches. If a branch has any issues or problems with its day-to-day operations it is expected to contact the NBSC for guidance. To identify any problems with the implementation of Branch Trading, I arranged to be notified of

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all calls logged by the NBSC that were registered as being about Branch Trading between 3 October and 7 December 2005. This included general queries and the reporting of non-receipt of materials and requests for exchanges of videos for CD-ROMs and vice-versa.

I have looked at the records of NBSC Calls sent to me logged under the subject of Branch Trading and there are no records of any calls made by South Warnborough SPOB. As such, on the evidence available to me, it would appear that South Warnborough SPOB did not raise any calls regarding Branch Trading in the period that these records cover. If so requested, I can produce schedules detailing all Branch Trading related calls as notified to me by the NBSC.

Any branch that reported the non-receipt of an item would have been posted a replacement. Additionally, any branch could have asked for a videocassette in place of the CD-ROM. A record was maintained of all replacement items sent to branches including the issuing of videocassettes. I have looked at these records and can find none relating to South Warnborough SPOB. This includes replacement items requested through channels other than the NBSC. As such, the evidence available to me suggests that South Warnborough SPOB made no requests for any replacement Branch Trading material or asked to be supplied with a videocassette in exchange for the interactive CD-ROM supplied during the period that these records cover or raised any general or specific questions pertaining to Branch Trading. If so requested, I can produce schedules detailing all replacement Branch Trading material sent out to branches including those that requested a videocassette.

Signature M Drake

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